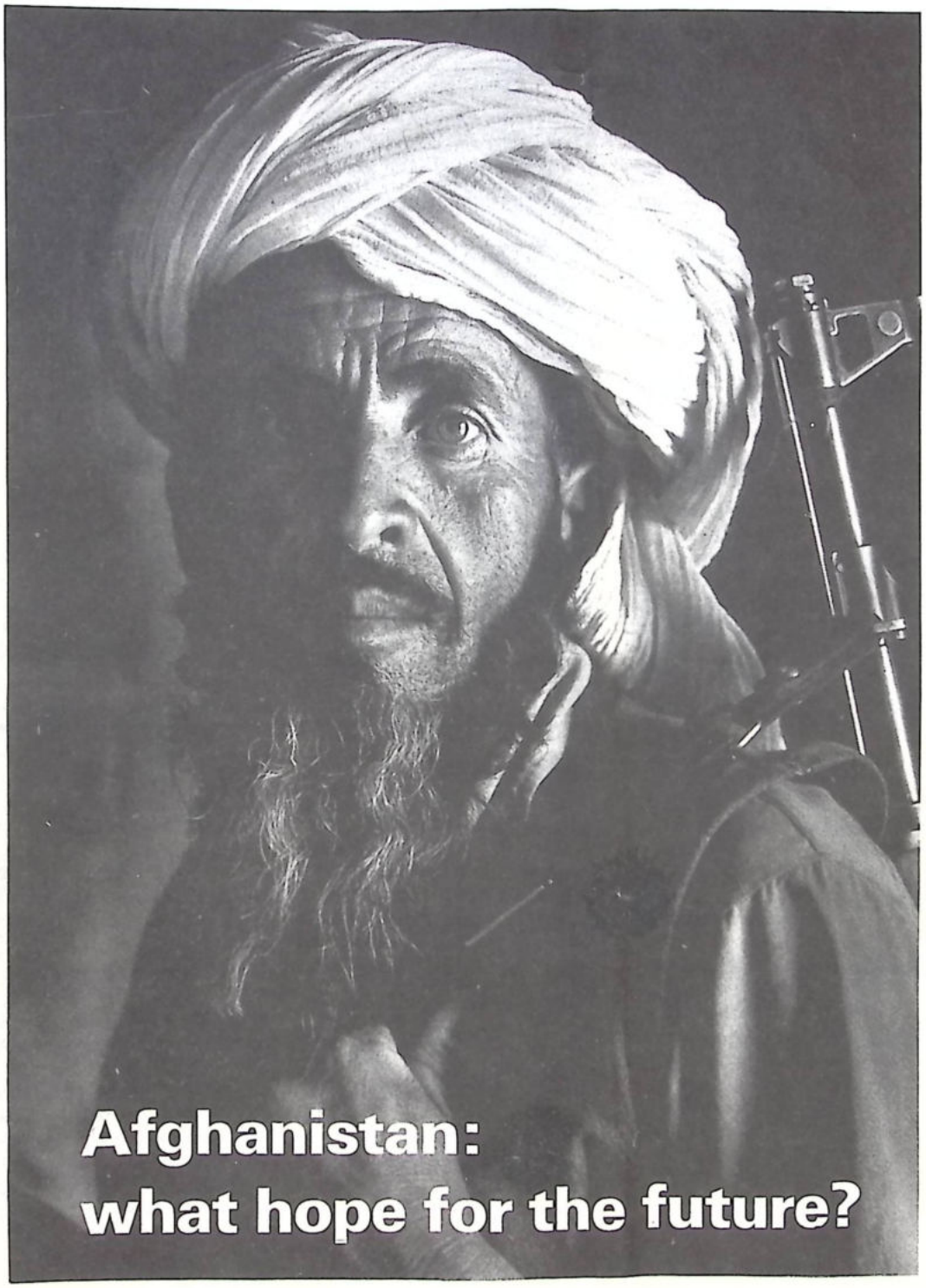
T/SOR/1611

Formerly VIRUS

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

30p
May-July
1989
Issue 15



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LETTERS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. It's structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the following areas:

Bradford, Birmingham, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co. Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Kent, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Wokingham and York.

We have internal groupings around the following industries and interests:

Health, Education, Unemployed, Postal, Students, Local Government, Community Youth Work and Women.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist communist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 125, Coventry, CV3 5QT.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). It was formerly called Virus, but it was decided to change the name as our last National Conference. Since A.I.D.S. the word "virus" has developed different, negative connotations to when the magazine was launched.

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate in depth debates on areas not normally covered by agitiational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and other open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise!, and as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles, we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadline for the August issue is June 30th.

All contributions to the next issue of Organise! should be sent to: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

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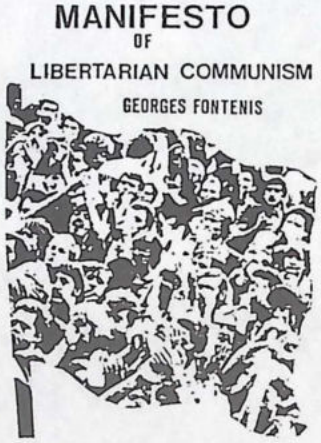

The Libertarian Communist Manifesto

ACE No 3 The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: a translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p inc p&p).

PRESS FUND

THANKS TO AN excellent response to our first Organise! Press Fund Appeal, we've easily reached our £250 target within our three-month deadline!

What a brilliant way to kick-off our Fund. Many thanks to all comrades, friends, readers and subscribers who gave donations.

The money raised will go a long way towards meeting our many production and postage costs, and - if this level of response can be kept up - we can begin to think about increasing the size of Organise!, and publishing it more frequently.

Between now and next issue, several fund raising events and benefits will be taking place - which should all help us reach our next £250 figure.

If you think Organise! - and other ACE publications - are worth supporting, help us by donating to this next appeal.

We want to raise £250 by July 20th. With your help, we can repeat our early success.

We ask all readers to send their donations (made payable to the 'ACF') as soon as possible to:

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Hiziki
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The schooling business

IN APRIL THE main provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 came into force - part of the Tories' strategy of claiming to 'decentralise power and remove bureaucratic control', whilst in reality introducing changes that only benefit an already priviledged few.

Schools will be able to "opt-out" of local education authority control and will instead get a State grant for each child plus money from rich parents and business investors. Schools in middle class areas will thrive, attended by kids from well-off families including those no longer needing to pay private school fees to get "the best" in education.

Recruit

The schools' business orientation will ensure that local capitalists will queue up to recruit the well-trained brainwashees as technicians at all levels.

Young people who stay on after 18 can go to the privatised Polytechnics which sell courses to employers as investments. The money Polys get from the State will have far more strings attached and business won't be thrilled at the prospect of funding the Polys - so the State ends up with more control.

Teacher-training will be more geared to the "enterprise culture" - so much for education being "child-centered". Well, it never was particularly, but now market consciousness alone guides decisions. Headteachers and principals in schools and colleges become no more or less than managers concerned with disciplining workforces and meeting budget targets.

Failed

Comprehensive Education may have failed miserably to meet the needs and desires of working class people, but the changes contained in the Act, will only increase the extent to which children are turned into just more commodities for capitalism.

As with the privatisation of the Health Service, power industries, etc, resistance has been muted because the old monolithic bureaucracies which ran things alienated everyone who came into contact with them, as "clients" or workers. The Tories play successfully on the reluctance of ordinary people to defend systems they have had such bad experience of. "Fight the Cuts!" sloganeering is not enough, and the left parties strike no chords with their campaigns, giving no sign that they oppose the rigid bureaucracies that ran, among other things, education.

Youth are not going to like the idea of fightng to keep schools the way they are! The idea of giving parents power over schools and limiting that of local officials seems, to many, no stupider than defending what's gone before.

The irony is that local authority control will be replaced by that of central government and business. Parents may have more say over minor matters but Boards of Governors will be dominated by investors, ie rich parents and companies, who - along with the State - will have the real say.

Economic

The overhaul of education is an example of the Tories starting from proposed changes everyone knew were needed; then planning and adminstering them so that virtually the opposite goals are served - in this case central control and the specific economic aims of the government.

And all in the name of de-centralising power, giving choice, lifting restraints, increasing freedom. But only for middle class parents who favour a reactionary model of learning, don't mind turning their children into value for capitalists' money and who don't care what happens to those who are less "fortunate".

Poor schools won't attract rich parents, business cash or enough kids to get by on government money. They won't have the resources to gar-coat the National Curriculum and GCSEs with more teacher-attention, morale, good equipment, books, etc.

Testing at ages 7 and 11 and publishing the results will be a punitive, arbitrary exercise: continual assessment will be continual alienation when teachers have little choice but to police children learning that they are to be further excluded from "affluent" society, with working-for-dole (or less) waiting on the other side of the school gates. Freedom and choice?

The ideals of Comprehensive Education will no longer be even a pretence, and resistance can't be aimed at protecting them. The struggle to improve wages and conditions needs to be combined with teachers developing tolerable environments within schools - necessarily opposing the system - as well as in action against the employers.

The interests of teachers and pupils may begin to converge - to the extent that n are placed in an impossible situation, asked to acheive impossible goals. When this kind of awareness can grow, so too can ways of resisting and fighting.●

Poll tax crunch point

THE FIGHT AGAINST the poll tax in Scotland is at the stage where its strengths and weaknesses are becoming apparent to those involved.

A Glasgow ACF comrade here reports on the political and tactical effectiveness of the different campaigns, as demands for the first payments arrive in Scotland:

"The 'Stop-It' campaign was the 'non-political' brainchild of the Labour Party, created to give the impression that they were actually doing something. It was based on the notion that you must not break the law.

Their position of being prepared to 'break the poor, but not the law' is held because they think they can work within the capitalist state to get realistic improvements. They cannot break the law since they will be using the state to impose their own anti-working class laws at a later date.

They do not want socialism but power, and as such they will only ever look after their own interests instead of those of the working class. There were arguments for non-payment by some in the Party, but the bureaucracy shut them up - hence 'Stop-It'.

Party

'Stop-It' advocated that people send their poll tax registration forms back uncompleted and queried, three weeks after receiving them. Its primary objective was to slow down implementation, and it comes as no surprise that ❱

it failed. The register can be compiled from all available records - the form itself is just a formality.

The lesson from Scottish groups is to form a local anti-poll tax group, collectively bin the forms and refuse to pay. Community group organising in their locality that have only followed the 'Stop-It' tactic have been sent back a small booklet with answers to all the questions you would ever think to ask about your form.

Group

The local 'community' groups have been in existence for about a year and a half now. There are two types: the 'group' and the 'union'. The union is based on card membership and public meetings. The group operates on an open committee basis. Organising meetings are open to all and have no power as such (as well as no permanent office bearers). I think that some sort of union with an open committee may be best.

The union organisations are dominated by political parties since their structure makes them easy to take control of. The more community based groups were either set up by anarchists or at least influenced by libertarian ideas. On the east coast, anarchists started forming community groups first, based on local, direct control from below. Trotskyists organisations could not make headway in these and set up rival groups under their control in the same areas. Watch out for these people, their authoritarian politics will alienate people and destroy effective action.

The creation of federations in Glasgow and Edinburgh was an attempt to co-ordinate activity. Unfortunately, they were quickly dominated by 'politicos' - particularly Militant members. The delegates conferences are controlled by parties on the executive council. They do not involve free discussion and delegates vote according to party allegiance, not in the interests of the locality. The bast way to ensure local control is to organise along anarchist lines.

The important message to get across is that only collective action will win. Try to organise street committees against snoopers and set up good communication networks. In Scotland we have found that such organisations must be self-managed or these will just be new bosses to overcome.

Industrial activity is also important. A mistake made here in Scotland was in failing to get council and other workers involved right from the start.

Boycott

Local government workers should be persuaded to boycott poll tax work. This will cause problems with implementation and can destroy the tax, with community and industrial solidarity.

The poll tax is a class issue, and only the working class can beat it - no political party will do it for us." •

Health 'shake-up'

Caring for pensioners health will eat into GP's budgets.

COMPARED TO OTHER health services, the NHS delivers some of the best medical care available. It could not do this without the care its staff put in, from domestics to consultants. The NHS helps millions of people to have a longer and more pleasant life.

However, there is a lot of room for improvement. The NHS is run by a vast and ineffecient bureaucracy, most workers having little say in its running. Many of its patients feel that they are treated as objects. Alternatives to traditional medicine, such as osteopathy, homeopathy are largely unavailable. Counselling services, too, are much needed, and, of course, there are still problems of understaffing, shortages and waiting lists.

The Tories present their new "NHS review" as a solution to many people's dissatisfaction. In fact, it is merely one more step towards their goal of privatising health care. The tragedy of the NHS for the Tories, is that it is not business like. It has a turn-over of £26 billion yearly, and is one of the largest employers in Europe, yet hardly anyone makes a profit out of it. The real tragedy is that there are many health needs the NHS does not cater for.

The "NHS review" aims to create an internal market within the NHS which would include the private sector. Health Authorities receive money to pay for health care and in future they will pay it directly to the hospital where the patient is sent. They will be forced to comb the country for the cheapest deal they can find, to make the best of limited funds.

All NHS hospitals will have to price all their services, employing more bureaucrats and creating even more paperwork. Hospitals may have to advertise their services. Fewer hospitals will attempt to give a comprehensive service, as specialisation will increase.

Objective

The specialisation will be in profitable areas of health care, mostly those that are high in technology and turnover of patients. Care for the chronically sick, the disabled, and preventitive measures such as cancer screening and care for the elderly will be dropped by any hospital that can get away with it. will mean the running of the NHS's most prestigious hospitals by businessmen. They will be able to turn these hospitals into little more than health farms for the wealthy. They will have no obligation to ptovide any care but emergency treatment, their prime concern will be profit.

The new GP practise budgets are a key part of the new NHS market. GPs will receive a fixed budget, and will choose health care according to cost, and not according to need. GPs will be discouraged from referring patients to hospital or specialists. They will be encouraged to prescribe drugs only if they life-saving or absolutely necessary. GPs will have to avoid patients who are often ill, or who are elderly, or who have a disability.

Cuts

The NHS market is the first step towards selling the NHS bit by bit. The private sector are already making plans to do deals with the NHS trust hospitals, GPs and Health Authorities. They hope to see more of the taxes of the working class put into their own pockets for the treatment of the wealthy.

Patients are the last to benefit from these new reforms, if you can afford to supplement your GP's budget, you might get a better deal. Whilst you are young and healthy, things might seem to have improved, however, the centralisation of treatment could mean having to travel many miles in different directions for different treatments.

Care for the elderly, disbled and chronically sick, has been run down by the Tories since they got into power. Community care has meant no care for some people. The present plans will worsen this. The government has offered tax relief on health insurance paid by relatives for their elderly. This is to help the middle-class and wealthier working class to opt out of a decaying system.

We do not want a bureaucratic health service unable to meet needs, nor do we want a profitable health service that over-treats the rich and under-treats the poor. Only when we have a health service run directly by those who work in it and under the direction of the community it serves, will we have a health service that is truly human, and that really puts patients first. •

AFGHANISTAN:
forwards, backwards or sideways?

MANY PEOPLE EAGERLY await the development of events in Afghanistan. Will the Mojahedin displace the Soviet backed Kabul regime? Would this be progress? What form would the new regime take?

Although the longest invasion by Russia, this was not the first. The Czars had an interest in the area and there were brief Soviet invasions in 1925, 1929 and 1930.

Afghan

The reasons for the 1979 invasion are complex. The Kaalqi (masses) faction, the majority wing of the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) had seized power through an army coup. The regime then found itself in trouble, ill prepared and with limited support in the countryside.

The "Brezhnev doctrine" was put into action, to ensure that a "communist" power should not revert back to capitalism. Bases in Afghanistan were of strategic importance to the Soviets—overlooking the Straits of Hormuz, the oil highway, and acting as levers on Iran, Pakistan and the Baluchis. Such a success would also act as a lesson to Muslims in Central Asia.

Kabul

Although the PDPA made serious mistakes, only a minority of the population supporting the coup which installed them, the Khalquis alienated people still further. They were heavy handed in their attempts to impose reform on a conservative society and met with much resistance.

Following the Russian invasion the more "moderate" Parchami (Banner) faction was installed. This was an attempt to create a broader political front, to give itself a wide power base and so rescue the situation.

The damage, though, had already been done. Whichever faction was in power was seen as godless and communist, despite Parchami protestations to the contrary. The Khalquis had imprisoned, tortured and executed too many for the Parchamis to escape the blood feud. Each regime was closely identified with "infidel" Russian invaders.

PDPA attempts at reform, particularly concerning the position of women and land ownership, fell foul of the conservatism of rural areas. As in any society, such things are part of a complex structure and cannot be changed by legislation imposed from above.

Islam

Social change, to be effective as well as meaningful, must come from the people themselves, not from powers outside them. Outside of the towns, attempts to change people's lifestyles and values met with resistance.

The anti-PDPA forces are properly united only upon this opposition, not upon any vision of the future. Mojadidi leads the moderate, more traditionalist Afghan National Liberation Front.

Karim Kalili leads the eight pro-Iran Shia groups, known for ambushing Sunni rebels as well as government troops. There are the monarchist "Gucci guerillas" of Pir Gailaui's National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, who look to the re-establishment of the king, Zahir Shah.

Hekmatyar leads the pro-Pakistan fundamentalist Hezb-e-Islami, a group which looks towards a totally Islamic society.

Pakistan

Jamiat-i-Islami, the largest group, lead by Rabbani Sayyaf's Itihaf-e-Islami, Saudi funded, applies a stricter fundamentalist line upon women and a harsher view of society as a whole. Even the moderate groups wish to see the imposition of Sharia (Islamic) law.

There are over 3 million Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, mainly in the North West Frontier Province. This influx has caused many problems. The amount of weapons moving through the area has made Pashawar another Beirut. Many of the Pakhtuni refugees have entered commerce in the region, increasing pressure upon an already depressed area.

The reactionary Pakistan military, channelling US aid and acting as its "puppet", has a real interest in the conflict. The Ojhri massacre, where hundreds died, was the result of US supplied missiles. Equipment sent for the Mujahedin was blown up to hide its sale from US investigators. Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence has been hard at work trying to influence events in its favour.

Soviet

What does all this mean to the USSR? The Empire of the Bear was stung repeatedly and beat a retreat after 9 years. Its attempt to use Soviet muslim troops was an abject failure as they had no desire to fight other muslims.

Not only do people in the Central Asian republics of the USSR have their own mullahs, many listen to the broadcasts beamed from Iran and are closely watching the rise of nationalism around the Baltic and in the Caucasus. Back in the 1920s the Basmach rebellion united muslims against the Bolsheviks. Could this happen again?

Whoever gains power, the losers will be the ordinary people of Afghanistan. US imperialism and the Pakistan military will attempt to hold Islamic Afghanistan up as an example. India, rival with Pakistan, will try to keep the PDPA regime afloat with airlifts of supplies. When and if the Mojahedin take power, then rivalry and dis-unity will continue. The conflict between Shia and Sunni, monarchist, moderate and fundamentalist will carry on.

Within the fundamentalists, those pro-Iranian, pro-Palestinian, pro-Saudi will vie for power.

Throughout all this, the peasants, women and poor will remain exploited while the wealth in gas, oil and minerals will be reaped by those struggling to gain or maintain control. •

Self-organisation Italian style

Lessons of the workers' Base Committees (COBAS)

THE ITALIAN WORKING class has created new forms of organisation within the last few years.

In the winter of 1986-87 self-organised structures developed throughout the public sector: particularly amongst teachers and railway workers.

These 'Base Committees' (COBAS) are still present today in many strikes and mobilisations. This article will give a brief analysis and history of a very interesting and useful experience.

The COBAS of the Teachers

The Teachers COBAS were first set up, principally in Rome and Naples, as a reaction to a 'National Convention of Work' that the four unions in teaching had agreed to. These were the GCIL, (Socialist and Communist); UIL, (Socialist); CISL, (Christian); SNALS, ('Corporatist').

Neither the teachers as a whole or the members of the signing unions had been consulted.

Unsatisfied

The tiny pay rises, and the greater intensification of work, did not satisfy the teachers. Even before the Convention was signed, the COBAS emerged.

Although they began as a typical product of the 'left fractions' within the unions, the discontent of the teachers soon made the COBAS develop into something much larger.

When the Convention was signed, strike action began, and the following demands were made:

1) A substantial pay rise; 2) An equal share among all school workers of the money needed for the intensification of work apparatus; 3) A maximum of 20 pupils per class; 4) Union rights for all (the Convention gave only those unions signing the right to hold workplace meetings).

The strike spread from Naples and Rome to the South and centre. It was not so strong in the north.

Even the COBAS were surprised by the spontaneous movement. For many years, teachers had been passive and now they showed all their discontent.

Provincial, regional and then national assemblies sprang up. Debates developed on the forms of organisation, working conditions and strategies for the schools.

In May 87 a huge demonstration took place in Rome in with 50,000 teachers on the streets. This (Italy's largest ever) set off a further mobilisation as other less advanced teachers joined the movement.

The delegates had to rigourously stick to their mandate under instant recall, if necessary, ensuring that power stayed in the hands of the workers.

The government fought back trying to break the strike with non-striking teachers. These refused, and themselves went on strike. They tried again by partially accepting one demand - the reduction of classes to 25. This allowed the government to appear as having made important concesssions to the strikers. The media whipped up public opinion against the strike - claiming that only extremists now wanted it to continue.

Faltered

In addition, the school holidays were imminent, and the strike faltered.

Within the COBAS there were also problems. There were those who wanted a relationship with the institutions and those who wanted to take the struggle further. With no solution being found, the COBAS became divided: some wanting to end the strike, and some to continue it.

In the meantime, a new government had been elected. The debate was now on forms of organisation as much as on the demands for a new Convention.

There was an intense debate between those seeing themselves as

professionals and wanting status, and those looking for alliances with other public sector workers.

For anarchists the central question was not so much whether the COBAS should become a union, but how best to improve the co-ordination of the movement and safeguard the gains of self-organisation and direct action.

The National Co-ordination of United Railworkers

At the beginning of 1987, railworkers founded the January 11th Movement, which inspired massive strikes in marine and air transport.

The movement, though younger than that of the teachers, had been prepared and preceeded by the Committee Against the Transfers and the Union of Anarchists and - the workers' group - Libertarian Railway Workers. The drivers were the spearhead of the COBAS, capable of blocking more than 80% of the network during the strike. They struggled for a real reduction in hours (they work 38 hours plus regular overtime) and against a reduction of staff levels.

The drivers were isolated, however, causing many problems and the GCIL bureaucrats attempted to break the movement by singing the praises of the next contract of work.

Profit

The union bureaucrats didn't oppose the state demand that the railways ought to be run at a profit, and supported reform and the deficit run up by management.

The drivers were not totally alone and were aided by other railworkers. The trains that the management could put back into action had to be driven by soldiers or managers, thus putting passengers lives at risk.

Although the drivers, being skilled, were fighting to maintain a wage differential, their strikes set off strike movements among other railway workers.

The United Assembly of COBAS

On 15 December 1987 the first assembly of all the COBAS met at, Rome, together with other structures, including Democrazia Consighiare - a left current in the CGIL. The main concerns were the defence of the right to strike and the struggle against the work laws in the public sector.

In fact, the strike issue was a key part of the offensive of both the ruling class and the union bureaucrats against the workers. The General Secretary of UIL welcomed a limit on the right to strike.

As a result the union bureaucrats, saw their main task as breaking the COBAS, and beyond that, all workers self-organisation, and bargaining their monopoly of negotiation and calling strikes with the State and the bosses.

Historical

This is the result of a very important historical process. The union bureaucrats reply to the crisis of confidence of the rank and file, and the progressive destruction of delegation, by an increasing integration into the capitalist system of command. It's as a result of the deepening divide between the rank and file and the bureaucrats, that independent organisations - opposed to the institutionalised structures - have been created.

An important element is the profound transformation of the union structures within the framework of the restructuring of capitalism. It is impossible to capture or hold or transform these bureaucracies even from a reformist point of view. As a result the COBAS have great importance in developing workers' self-organisation.

Several organisations and many militants of a libertarian outlook work inside the COBAS, and played an important role among the teachers' and traindrivers' COBAS.

Militants

Alongside the comrades of the FAI (Italian Anarchist Federation), and a section of the USI (a small syndicalist union similar to the Spanish CNT), we find the libertarian communist militants of the FDCA (Anarchist Communist Federation), the OCL (Libertarian Communist Organisation) and the PAI (Italian Anarchist Party).

Despite the fact that many differences do exist amongst class struggle anarchists in Italy, it is equally true that there are strong similarities - the defence of self-organisation, workers' democracy, and direct action.

The libertarian organisations and militants lack structures and opportunities for debate and exchange of ideas. This can often aggravates differences.

The proposition by the FAI comrades to open a dialogue between libertarians active in the COBAS should be taken into account by Italian libertarian communists.

Unity

Differences should not be fudged, but brought out and discussed - so that different strategies can be considered, and possible areas of unity examined.

Libertarian workers have an important role in the COBAS, but they cannot rally it entirely to their position in the short term.

But the libertarian contribution can be decisive in the difficult recomposition of the workers' movement. For that, there is need for clarity, dialogue, exchange and unity between all those libertarians who wish to develop the class struggle. •

THIS ARTICLE FIRST appeared in the Italian anarchist paper La Lutta.

HOUSING UNDER THREAT

"IT'S ALL ABOUT tenants choice", is how Tory environment secretary Nicolas Ridley summed up the essence of the new Housing Act which came into force in January this year.

Under the guise of increasing that 'choice' the Tories have launched an all-out attack on public sector housing; threatening council tenants, council workers, and offering nothing to the growing army of homeless people.

The threats contained in the Act have led to an explosion in the number of active and militant tenants organisations nationwide. From Edinburgh to Gloucester, from Torbay to Tower Hamlets, mass meetings hundreds strong have met to plan campaigns of resistance.

The new legislation could scarcely have come at a worse time. Soaring house prices, combined with the virtual standstill in council house building programmes, have created a crisis in housing. As the demand for housing has increased, the supply of affordable private rented accomodation has, in many areas of the country, all but dried up.

Homeless

Homelessness has doubled since 1979, and, according to the housing campaign group Shelter, now stands at over 112,000 in England alone. The situation in Birmingham - where the 25,000 people on the council's waiting list will have to compete for the dozen new homes the city plans to build this year - is typical.

Working class families with mortgage commitments have fared little better. A government who came to power pledging to spread home ownership, by encouraging a mortgage credit boom, has relentlessly forced up interest rates. Many of the thousands of families and young couples who were forced to 'over-commit' themselves to heavy mortgages just to get a foothold on the housing ladder, are finding themselves increasingly unable to meet their repayments.

It's against this background that the seriousness of the latest attacks on working class housing can be measured.

The key element of the new Act is the drive to push council housing into the hands of the private sector, through the selling off of whole council estates. Linked to this is the abolition of 'fair renting' (through which a tenants could get a fixed rent enforced on a property they were living in) freeing landlords to charge a more 'realistic' (ie higher) market rent.

'Assured tenancies' are replacing 'secure tenancies' stripping tenants of what little protection they had against harrassment, eviction, or the simple neglect of repairs.

By making the private rented sector more 'attractive' - through weakening tenants power and boosting the potential for profits - the Tories hope to encourage thousands of small private landlords onto the market.

In the public housing field the Tories claim their objective is "to get people off that most deadly of all social drugs - the drug of dependence on the state".

In reality their goal is to destroy the last major obstacle in the way of giving the 'market' free reign in the housing field: large scale council housing.

Their objective is all the more clear when seen in the context of the war they are waging on the power of local government. With the destruction of public sector housing, the last remaining power base for local authorities will be smashed.

The ability of councils to manage their housing stock has been under constant attack since the 'right-to-buy' legislation was first introduced in the early 80s.

Labour authorities realise the importance of the power struggle that the Housing Act represents, and are as determined to fight to hang onto their power base as the Tories are to remove it.

The danger is that - unless they are clear about their own demands - tenants may simply become the pawns in this power struggle.

The plans to sell-off council estates directly threaten working class people in a number of ways. For tenants there is the threat of rent rises, increased evictions, the loss of repair and maintenance services, the fear of being forced out by landlords eager to 'redevelop' prime building land.

For council employees, working in housing departments and the Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs), there is the threat of sweeping job losses. And for the homeless, those still living with parents, and those on council waiting lists, such sales can only spell disaster.

But in fighting to repel big business landlords, we must go beyond an uncritical demand of 'defend council housing'. We have always opposed the centralised, bureaucratic and paternalistic way in which council estates are - by definition - run. And we don't see corporate housing provision as some 'bastion of socialism' that is under threat.

When council housing first appeared it did mark a significant improvement on much of the slum dwelling it was meant to replace.

Confirm

But a walk round any large city in Britain will confirm what has become of these 'homes fit for heroes'. Badly designed, run-dowm and decaying estates. Vandalised tower blocks no-one wants to live in. 'Problem estates' where councils dump 'difficult' families. And, increasingly, demolition work to pull down houses put up twenty years ago, and already uninhabitable.

As anarchists we recognise this as the inevitable result of capitalist social policy, which sees working class people as so many units to be housed as compactly and cheaply as possible.

Council tenants don't enjoy some sort of 'special relationship' with their land-

lord denied to private tenants. They certainly have no more 'say' in the managing of their homes.

On estates run down and neglected for years, underfunded and denied resources, it's hard to see why local council tenants should readily jump to the defence of council bureaucrats who have shown no interest in their housing needs til now.

That's why its crucial that in the fight over housing we make it clear that we are fighting for our immediate class interests (ie keeping out big business) not rallying to protect our wonderful council landlords.

Potential

So what strategies should we be arguing for? The anarchist author Colin Ward has long argued that self-help can offer tenants a way forward without either public or private landlords. He argues that housing is one of the most obvious areas where the creative potential of self-activity can be realised on a large scale in the here and now.

Some anarchists involved with the present round of housing struggles have found themselves agreeing - often for very pragmatic reasons: if tenants are faced with a council determined to sell off local estates, then some sort of tenants buy-out may seem the only practical solution.

But such buy-outs are fraught with problems. Leaving aside the council workers whose jobs will be lost through such a sale, the fact remains that the estate will not be able to escape the confines of the market place.

All the tasks of a landlord still have to be performed: like pushing up rents as costs rise, chasing up and evicting people with rent arrears, selecting 'reliable' new tenants (ie those who can afford to pay), and so on.

Tenants organisations can easily find themselves unable to attract the capital investment needed to maintain and repair - let alone improve - their housing stock. Financial institutions willing to invest in co-ops will naturally insist on conditions - like rent increases, land sales - before releasing funds. Co-ops have little independent economic clout.

And it's a fact of capitalist-life that co-operatives running large concerns tend very quickly to end up being run by a small committee composed of the more confident (and usually more middle class) members.

It may be that on a given estate, a 'tenants co-operative' is the least worst option. But we should not get dazzled by the prospect of self-help rented housing. For as long as the market exists, the best it offers us is the chance to be our own landlord.

We can take strength from the fact that these latest attacks on housing have rekindled tenants' willingness to fight: already the Tories have been forced to make concessions.

They had planned to enforce Housing Action Trusts (HATs) on several trial areas, earmarked for sale. HATs were to be given large budgets and sweeping planning powers, and charged with the job of smartening estates up in the run-up to the sell-offs.

At a public meeting in Lambeth late last year, a HAT consultant only uttered three sentences before being sent packing by enraged tenants. Such reaction has been typical of the way working class people have responded to the threat of being HATed.

Ubruptly, the Tories announced that all estates were now to be balloted before a HAT could be introduced.

If the tenants initial victory over the HATs issue was an embarrassing setback for the government - showing early on that tenants action could be effective - then events in Torbay at the start of the this year compounded their problems.

Within weeks of the Act becoming law, the results of a ballot called by Tory-controlled Torbay council showed only 787 out of 5,206 tenants to be in favour of selling off their entire housing stock.

Under the rigged ballot system, those who don't vote are counted as being in favour of transfer. As 42% of Torbay residents abstained, local Tories were able to claim a mandate. While they prepared to sign the papers, Ridley dithered. He hadn't wanted the first showpiece sell-off to be so transparently 'unfair'. He halted the sale, calling on the council to hold a second, postal ballot, "to establish more clearly the views of tenants". Torbay Tories panicked by this eleventh hour U-turn, refused, and abandonded the sale indefinitely. Local council tenants were jubilant. In an attempt to repeat the Torbay victory, many groups have held 'pre-emptive' ballots on their estates, repeatedly showing overwhelming opposition to the sell-offs.

In the face of such campaigns, HATs have been forced back from estates in London, Leeds, Sandwell and Sunderland.

Strategies

The most effective fights have been in areas where tenants have joined forces with local council employees. It's been a major politicising experience for tenants to sit down with workers from DLOs and thrash out joint strategies to fight for common interests. Especially when before there's often been hostility - with tenants blaming DLO workers over delays in getting repairs done, and DLO workers getting fed up with hostile attitudes from complaining tenants.

Many Labour authorities, keen to ensure tenants votes in the coming ballots, have suddenly found money to pay for essential improvements.

Tenants and council workers can, of course, spot such cynical electioneering a mile off. But councils' attempts at short-term bribery could well back fire on them

Labour authorities -- who for reasons of self-preservation - have encouraged the growth of tenants actions groups solidly opposed to their estates being sold-off, may learn to regret their actions, when the new found mood of confidence, militancy and organisation is then turned on the council over issues like the poll tax.

As anarchists we should oppose the sale of council estates, because in 99 cases out of a 100, such sales will result in even worse conditions than exist at present.

Direct

In fighting this threat, we should welcome and wholeheartedly encourage the forging of direct links between tenants groups, rank and file council workers, the homeless, and those on waiting lists - and highlight the growing class consciousness that underlies such developments. In such organisations we should argue for the maximum direct community involvement.

But there are wider issues here.

At the heart of opposition to the Housing Act is the central question of control. Who should control the streets, flats and estates where working class people live; who should have the real say in what happens in those communities; and who should control the resources needed to enact the decisions of those communities?

When such questions are raised, the anarchist case for real direct community control - through the destruction of the capitalist system, and the evicting of all its landlords - becomes a compelling one. •

THE DARK NIGHT OF WILLI JELINEK

ZWICKAU IS AN industrial town in Saxe, in what is now East Germany, not far from Chemnitz and the Czech border.

Metal smelting factories and mines are in the close vicinity. From 1922 to March 1933 the Protelarischer Zeitgeist ("The Worker's Spirit") had been edited there.

It was a weekly, anti-authoritarian in character, which attempted to develop links between anarchists and the council communists.

In May 1945, only six survivors of the group remained alive. Twenty seven had been murdered by the Gestapo. One of the survivors, Willi Jelinek, had hidden the subscription list to Zeitgeist and now sent detailed letters to the most sure of these, with the view to reviving an organisation.

The Russians now occupying the area were pushing for a fusion of the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and the Communist Party (KPD) to create a United Socialist Party (SED) which would be a camouflage for the Communists.

Jelinek denounced this move:

"The Communist Party plays the role of a fox who wants to calm the fears of the hare by making out that he is a vegetarian".

Reorganise

In another letter (February 1946) to anarchists he took a stand against any participation by anarchists in a socialist-communist bloc. He thought that the SPD-KPD union would be of short duration and then the anarchists would come into their own. Hence the need to reorganise the anarchist movement.

In June 1946, the Zwickau Circle - made up of old readers of Zeitgeist and union activists - was set up and sent out bulletins to anarchists in the Russian zone and in West Germany.

In Saxe, five or six groups were set up, the same number in Thuringia. Links were set up with anarchists in Hamburg, Mulheim (in the Ruhr) and Kiel.

In the factory where he worked, Jelinek had been elected by 95% of the workers as president of the workplace council and he worked

the FDGB union of the Russian zone. The Communists, who had known Jelinek for a long time, thought that he had modified his ideas, but from the first meetings of the workplace council they were quickly disillusioned.

When the united SED Party was founded, the Communists called on Jelinek to leave the presidency of the council - which he refused to do. The Zwickau Circle set up a 'bureau of information' and sent out circulars exposing the insurmountable practical problems in the Russian zone: the editing of a paper, the use of a duplicator, were forbidden.

Nevertheless, they resolved to continue. They decided to forget about the anarchists who had joined the SED and address themselves to the new generation, and to the workers, showing them the nature of Stalinism. At the end of 1947, Jelinek wrote a pamphlet which was refused circulation. He denounced the dictatorship of the proletariat "which signifies the authority of the leaders. Where there is obedience, there are leaders who command". All dictatorship meant the rule of a minority. Distribution of leaflets and letters became more difficult. The police kept a constant watch on Jelinek.

Jelinek still had some illusions that the regime in the Russian zone would 'liberalise' a little, allowing for the open circulation of an anarchist paper, and he wrote that things would be better for anarchists under Ulbricht than under Hitler!

On November 10th 1948, he was arrested by two Russian officers accompanied by an interpreter and by an official of the German criminal police. His wife and 'son-in-law' were also arrested - and the latter disappeared without trace.

After a long interrogation Mrs Jelinek returned to a flat which had been completely emptied of furniture. The anarchists in the Russsian zone were summoned to a bogus meeting in Leipzig and arrested. Jelinek himself was sent to the former Nazi concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, which now housed opponents of the Communists!

He was accused of "fascist and militarist activities". The wave of arrests of November 1948 claimed 45 victims, condemned to 25 years in prison. The second wave of arrests in Spring 1949 led to the arrests of many other anarchists - 100 in Dresden alone.

Anarchists

In Sachsenhausen, Jelinek met up with other comrades and they set up a secret group. Jelinek's ration was reduced, and then because of his continued association with other anarchists, he was sent on to the concentration camp at Bautzen.

Here prisoners suffered from hunger, and many died of TB. On March 13th 1950, a revolt took place and a Commission of Russian officers, and members of the German 'people's police' promised better conditions. In fact, they became worse, and a new uprising took place on March 30th.

Jelinek managed to smuggle an appeal to West Germany on the miserable conditions of thousands of prisoners at Bautzen and Torgau. This appeal appeared in the Hamburg Echo of May 15th 1950.

For this Jelinek was rewarded by worse treatment. At the beginning of 1952, two anarchists at Bautzen died of TB. On March 20th 1952, Jelinek was still in reasonable health, when visited by his daughter. But on March 24th, he died in conditions that still remain mysterious.

The little known story of Willi Jelinek deserves to be repeated, not just for the courage of a devoted anarchist militant, but as an example of what anarchists can expect under a Communist regime. •

Industrial hardcore

THE BEATNIGS, The Beatnigs; (Alternative Tentacles).

THE FACT THAT groups like Public Enemy are getting their views across to a lot of young black Americans, highlights the disillusionment and bitterness that is spreading throughout the States. The ideas of separatism are growing amongst the urban black communities, with Louis Farahkhan as its main spokesman, and rap music as its messenger.

The Beatnigs are a black band from San Francisco and their self-titled LP was released at the end of last year. Enclosed with the album is the "aural instruction manual" through which they inform us of the importance of shortening the word "nigger" to "nig" is that it serves as a constant reminder that things have not and will not change, until we change them.

From "C.I.A." and their covert international affairs, to "a report from South Africa" where the South African government racially reclassifies those of intermediate skin colour, but "no whites applied to become black, and no blacks applied to become white".

Drugged

The recent single "Television" is an analysis of American culture where the whole nation is under the influence of one drug - T.V. It is through songs such as this that the bands humour becomes apparent -"T.V.! Is the place where self cancelling phrases like Pop Art, Fresh Frozen, and Military Intelligence have become standard".

With the use of powerful percussive patterns, interwoven with chainsaws, axle grinders, and almost any industrial hardware they can lay their hands on, The Beatnigs forge an energetic and aggressive sound. Mixed into this is a battery of sampled speeches and statistics. But unlike "most industrial bands who use metal in a nihilist way, we're taking the waste from our community and are trying to make a noise that is meaningful".

It is understandable why the ideas of separatism are growing when you think that it is unlikely that many urban young blacks come across whites except those who are in positions of authority, e.g. policemen, teachers, social workers etc. But to understand and reject ideas are two different things. In order to be revolutionary any form of organisation needs to combat capitalism and the class struggle.

Struggle

The Beatnigs, though not anarchist, recognise that installing black mayors, senators etc. will do little for the plight of blacks in America. Instead, they recognise all forms of oppression while focussing their attention on racism as this is what they have direct experience of. •

The Beatnigs.

Let's wreck the Party

ONE STEP BEYOND or SMASH THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY; Pirate Press/Phoenix Press, 45p.

AS THE BACK page of this pamphlet points out, it is not intended to provide other authoritarian left groupings with something to 'gloat over' as they all carry the potential to be as harmful to revolutionary initiatives as the RCP (Revolutionary Communist Party).

In an immediate sense, however, it is necessary to deal with the RCP as an individual problem, because of their particularly destructive and demoralising effect on militants that become involved with them.

The text of the pamphlet was written in Nottingham in January 1988 as an article for Nottingham Anarchist News, at a time when the RCP were gaining members (although they have never had much political influence) in the town. They had always been a bit of a joke locally - a bunch of middle class "angry young men and women" from the Polytechnic telling an established and active political community (including many anarchists) how it really was.

Then the incidents of physical violence against women by party members increased and were actively condoned by the organisation as a whole. Their file on local potential recruits was allowed to fall into police hands, and they began to be perceived as rather more of a problem.

The RCP are not a problem politically - their theory is even less logical or consistant than most Leninist groupings, and they come across as so 'upstartish' that they will never gain the kind of influence in trade unions, local politics or campaigns that more dangerous organisations like the Workers Revolutionary Party(s) or the Stalinists do.

But the slick packaging and 'youth appeal' of the Party enables them to recruit endless 'supporters' - nearly all young students and literally work them till they drop, like some fanatical religious grouping.

The Party elite keep a tight reign on the 'supporters' indoctrinating them with the Party line, but more importantly, with the need to 'win over the working class' (you can watch them 'targetting' people they perceive to be 'working class' when they are street selling the next step. Like all Leninists they seek to destroy working class self activity and replace it with party leadership - an ideology that consistently stifled revolutionary initiatives throughout history.

The strength of the pamphlet is that it is not simply an academic expose of Leninist theory - that has been done better in other places. But it is based on first hand observation and accounts of the dangerous tactics of this arrogant political hierarchy.

Anyone who has had contact with the RCP - especially if they are 'interested' in you - should read it. •

Working class resistance

ORGANISE! IS MILES better than Virus. And the new Aims and Principles are a lot sharper too: like the article on the limits to rank and file action, it's a good kick up the arse for the syndicalists!

But now a moan. The purism of your article on Ireland really pissed me off. I reckon you just squashed the reality of the Six Counties to make it fit your "Anarchist" (Capital "A") framework. First off, you said that the last 20 years have been "twenty years of defeat for the proletariat". OK, so there been no working class revolution in Ireland, but I don't need to read Organise! to know that. I'd say that the last twenty years have been two decades in which the republican working class hasn't been defeated. Twenty years of the working class organising itself and fighting back...

Similarly, I agree that uniting Ireland without a working class revolution is a total waste of time. You rightly say that the Orange state will only be smashed by "mass, conscious struggle". What the hell do you think the Republican Movement is? Gerry Adams and a few mates in balaclavas? That's a typicaly bourgeois way of seeing history: you should be looking at the class, not the organisation...

You're right again to say that armed struggle in the abstract is elitist. But you're wrong to say it of Ireland. Armed struggle in the Six Counties occurs in the context of working class resistance to British imperialism. That resistance isn't just military., and nor it it solely organised by Sinn Fein. Where do IRA volunteers come from? Out of thin air? They come from the Republican Movement which is much wider than organisations involved in military actions. It's absolute bollocks to say that the Republican Movement is "essentially petit bourgeois". It is a working class and secular movement.

Your analysis of the Six Counties is basically too abstract to be useful. You've decided that because the Republican Movement defines itself as "nationalist" (in that it fights for a united Ireland free from British imperialism), it is therefore petit bourgeois, and can only work to the advantage of capitalism. It would have been much more interesting and useful if you had looked at the working class socialist elements in the Republican Movement, and to hell with your anarchist prejudices.

Your alternative strategy leaves a lot to be desired as well. You reckon that Loyalist workers have to be won over from Loyalism by "the building of a revolutionary, secular socialist movement". If you've learnt anything since 1969, you'll know that this is a total non-starter. Or do you imagine the Orange State will just sit by and let it happen. They'll do what they did when it happened in 1932: kill it dead. The power of Loyalism doesn't rest in the reactionary beliefs of Loyalist workers: it lies in the Orange State. If that is smashed, then the ideology of Loyalism will look like the pile of bigoted shite that it is.

Love and solidarity
Ed
Attack International
London

AUTHOR'S REPLY: Whilst agreeing with us that uniting Ireland without a working class revolution is a non-starter, comrade Ed fails to offer us an alternative strategy for bringing this about.

S/he claims that the last 20 years have seen the working class in the Six Counties organising itself and fighting back. But does he s/he consider the campaigns - military and political - of the IRA and the Republicans to be examples of genuine self-organisation by the class, for its own interests? Surely not.

Ed's claim that the Republican Movement is "a working class and secular movement" is also at fault unless we are prepared to consider the Labour Party a working class party, simply because it contains a large percentage of workers. Because the support for Republicanism (in the North) comes from large sections of the Catholic working class, proves nothing. It is class consciousness and political (communist) ideas that defines a proletarian movement, not simply the economic backgrounds of its participants.

The Republicans are essentially petit-bourgeois in terms of politics, even if they use violent means and espouse radical views.

As far as we are concerned there is little evidence of socialism (as opposed to leftism) in the Republican Movement. Any groups(s) moving towards a libertarian communist perspective would soon have to leave the Republican camp if they were to to develop an independent, class politics.

Ed is right to say that the power of Loyalism lies in the Orange State itself, but the power to overthrow this bastion of bigotry lies in the hands of the working class of Ireland - North and South - and at least a minority of Protestant workers will have to be won to revolution to do this.

Finally I would repeat that Ed's letter doesn't offer a strategy to help bring about the destruction of the the Orange dictatorship and British imperialism. What does s/he suggest we do? Support uncritically or critically the IRA? Surely we as anarchist communists have something more positive and revolutionary to say than this? If not then we run the risk of simply tail-ending nationalism (a job best left to Trots et al) and writing off the possibility of independent working class organisation and action.

CORRECTION: A typing error slipped into the Ireland feature in the last issue - 'From imperialist war to class war'. The paragraph which started:

"The Civil Rights Movement was in no way dominated by the IRA, which has been dormant since the defeat of their 1950's campaign", should, of course, have read:

"The Civil Rights Movement was in no way dominated by the IRA which had been dormant since the defeat of their 1950's campaign". Our apologies.

Working class fightback or petit-bourgeois nationalism?

'Rank and file' debate

THE REVIEW OF the Anarchist Workers Group pamphlet In Place of Compromise and the 'rank and file action' article in Organise! 14 reveals an analysis of trade unions which is far too one dimensional.

It is borrowed from the politics of 'left-communists' who also see unions as "part of the array of ideological forces used by the State against workers". Unions, however, do not simply exist as the 5th column of capital within the working class. They exist to defend the interests of workers within capitalism, and as such they are a contradictory social phenomenon.

The contradiction is essentially between the interests of the rank and file - which are anti-capitalist - and the interests of the bureaucracy

which are to maintain a permanent mediation between labour and capital.

This contradiction has during certain periods of mass struggle manifested itself as a rank-and-file revolt. The important point for anarchists in Britain, is that unions are still capable of defending the members interests to a significant extent.

This is why the Tories have abolished quangoes and abandoned the 'beer and sandwiches' of the corporatist 'Social Contract'. This is also why Thatcher spent £26,000 per miner to defeat the NUM and has built a battery of anti-union laws. Unions represent an impediment to the bosses' plans to restructure British capitalism, which in the final analysis is why anarchists should advocate a rank-and-file movement which can act independently of the bureaucracy.

The author of the article concedes that the First World War shop stewards committees could have been transformed "into workers councils and soviets thereby crippling the state" indicating their revolutionary potential. They then go on to contradict this by saying: "a steward who is a revolutionary cannot last".

True, stewards <u>are</u> negotiators, but it is not the act of negotiating which mysteriously corrupts. The steward's own livelihood is at stake when they are negotiating, unlike the paid official whose job and whose salary is not directly affected by their negotiation.

We are advised that anarchists "should stay in the unions" and pay their dues but should completely <u>abstain</u> from the struggle to control how this money is spent. This is bad logic. Why is it alright to fight for "minor, or major improvements in working conditions or wages" but wrong to fight for <u>any</u> improvements in union democracy? Unlike syndicalists we do not confuse democratising unions with revolutionising them. We say that if workers have the potential power to take on the capitalist state, they also have the power to exercise greater control over their own unions, and they should do so.

The author says "we should not have a set of reformist demands" but "we argue the tactics needed to win". This in effect allows the bureaucrats to determine the political content of the struggle and restricts anarchists to 'tail-ending' struggles "when the rank and file feels it is right to do it".

In reality you cannot seperate demands from tactics. If the bosses want redundancies then any demands which concedes the need for profitability will tend to lead to ineffective action.

The AWG says that rank-and-file groups should argue for demands which are based on what workers need, not what capitalism can afford. This must necessarily involve a <u>political struggle</u> over what they are fighting for for. To win this 'political independence' anarchist ideas must be taken into all forums where workers are organised, which means working within the existing unions "until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event".

As the Dielo Trouda group understood clearly over 60 years ago: "we must seek to exercise our theoretical influence on all trade unions and in all its forms." (Organisational Platform of Libertarian Communists)

Yours in struggle
Duleep
Branch Secretary
London Anarchist
Workers Group

<u>AUTHOR'S REPLY</u>: You say "unions are still capable of defending their members interest to a singificant extent". I'd like to know what you mean by this. You seem to be confusing the <u>union</u> with the <u>members</u>.

The most 'powerful' unions operate in industries where militancy and solidarity is relatively strong anyway. Unions may initiate token protests but this is always because the membership have forced them to do <u>something</u>. Most strikes, for example, begin as wildcats. Unions seek to contain strength and militancy.

It is true that the government is attacking union leaderships, but only as part of their general attack on old style business practices. The real target, as always, is the working class.

There was revolutionary potential during World War One, and the formation of the Shop Stewards Committees expressed one aspect of it. I argued that the Committees failed because they were only radical union bodies. Workers councils/soviets would have sprung up due to a generalising of the struggle, if it had taken on an insurrectional nature.Something the Committees were unable to propose.

The Movement was not revolutionary. It's not, therefore, contradictory to say: "a steward who is a revolutionary cannot last". I suggest you read Huw Beynon's <u>Working for Ford</u> for a useful insight into the nature of a shop steward's job.

Revolutionaries cannot accept the 'legality' of capitalism or negotiate with the bosses for a fairer form of exploitation, stewards <u>must</u> do this.

Why should we waste our time trying to 'democratise' the union? Rather than continually debating with the union bureaucracy, it is better to operate amongst the ordinary workers.

Controlling our struggles collectively, in all areas of life, is political. What encourages a revolution is the <u>method</u> of our struggles. Various union type 'demands' will not take us as far as struggles which <u>we</u> control, and thus have a better chance of winning. We must encourage any actions that go beyond the control of the union <u>now</u>, not later.

The Anarchist Workers Group obviously adheres to the theory of the 'transitional demand' - see my article for more about that kind of politics.

Lesbian and gay network

SINCE CLAUSE 28 became law it seems there has been a decline in political lesbian and gay activity. We would like to make contact with lesbians and gay men who want to continue radical political activity and fight for lesbian and gay liberation.

We know that there are many lesbians and gay men fed up with boring respectable middle class campaigns, who don't like endless meetings, and who see racism, sexism and class oppression and disability as central issues to changing society.

Despite the many faults with Stop the Clause campaign, through it we heard of, and met, lots of lesbians and gays into creative ideas and actions.

We would like to hear from lesbians and gay men (especially anarchists, greens and non-party socialists and communists) who are interested in working together and building a network, newsletter and education / campaigns.

If you're interested please write to me at the following address: c/o 24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham, B18, West Midlands.

Nik

Labour's 'socialism'

WHILE THE ARTICLE "The Myth of Labour's 'Socialism'" was generally good, especially in the explanation of what 'labourism' really means, I think it was vague over the meaning of 'socialism'. Is the Labour Party socialist or not, and what is socialism? Is socialism a good thing or not?

You say: "The history of the Labour Party is part that of

hounding, isolating and, if necessary, expelling socialists from its ranks. The purging of the Militant Tendency is just the latest phase of a long and shameful tradition".

The Labour Party is a party that supports capitalism and offers a slightly different plan for capitalism's success to,

say, the Tory Party. It will of course expel extremists from its ranks, if it believes they will adversely affect its chances of electoral success and/or support from sections of the bourgeoisie.

For us, the expelling of Militant isn't 'shameful', it's about as important as, say, the expelling of the Monday Club from the Tory Party.

You're right with "Tony Benn and his brand of 'socialism'". But I feel you should have made it clear that, while Militant may be more extreme than Benn, they offer as little to the working class as both Benn and Kinnock.

At the end you say: "The constitutional road to change is blocked, only the revolutionary option remains open". What does this mean? What sort of 'change' could be got from following constitutional means if it weren't blocked? Has this road ever been unblocked? Surely the idea that we can change things in any meaningful way by constitutional means has always been a myth?

The implication of the article is that a real 'socialist' leadership of the Labour Party would mean we wouldn't have to have a revolution to achieve the changes we need. Surely some mistake?

Pete
ACF (Thames Valley)

AUTHOR'S REPLY: IN an otherwise prejudiced and ignorant article entitled "Socialism and Anarchism" (1905) Lenin managed to make one accurate observation, namely that "a wide gulf separates socialism from anarchism".

Anarchists could not agree more! I raise this point because some people have assumed that my condemnation of Labour's treatment of the Militant Tendency somehow implied approval of that organisation. (Organise! 14 - "The Myth of Labour's Socialism").

Nothing could be further from the truth. Socialism of all varieties implies state ownership, a large degree of centralisation, governments and authoritarianism. These are all rejected by anarchists. The Militant Tendency advocates all of the above, though in an ever more dogmatic and grotesque form than is usual for Leninist-Trotskyists.

However, the solving of Labour's internal political problems through the administrative means of expulsion rather than argument, shows it to be equally repugnent. The point of the article was to show that the Labour Party cannot even meet the requirements of Socialism-inadequate though they are.

Bhutto's election 'victory'?

IN THE ARTICLE entitled "Out of Reaction and Into Compromise" (Organise! 14) the writer starts off with a sincere gesture to try to put us in the picture about Pakistan's history before he talks about the future of the country.

In the second paragraph he/she states "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power with the only freely elected majority in Pakistan's history". What a dispicable lie.

In the general election of December 1970, Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) won only 85 seats and Sheikh Mujib's Awami League won 167 seats! The Awami League had an absolute majority to form a governmnent. But Bhutto, a Sindhi tribal chieftain, was not going to have any of it. He had won 85 seats and less than 20% of the vote, but was all ready to 'celebrate the PPP victory'!

And during the general elections, when the Awami League had the majority to form the government, Bhutto and the Punjabi Army got cold feet because the Bengalis were going to to to create a more balanced nation - every one of the races (Baluchis, Pakhtoons, Bengalis, Punjabis, Mujahirs - Urdu speaking immigrants from India - and Sindhis) was going to have equal opportunities under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman!

They got frightened and took to killing unarmed Bengali demonstrators while the negotiations were going on between the Parties and the Army. Punjabis killed millions of innocent Bengalis and ran like cowards when faced with Mukhti Fouj ('Freedom Fighters').

Then on the 23rd of March 1970, Bengalis tore down the Pakistan flag and unfurled the flag of Bangladesh. The rest is history.

When Bengladesh was finally liberated, its whole industrial infrastructure had been destroyed. The day before the surrender, the Pakistani Army collected some 300 of the leading Bengali intellectuals and technocrats, led them to a dug-out, and shot and buried them. They did this to try to decimate the Bengali intellectual base. Unfortunately, the Pakistani murderers were not tried, unlike the Nazis and collaborators, because Bengalis did not have the clout of the Jewish and other people - an indictment on all peoples of the world, especially the Arabs.

Pakistan remains divided by hate and greed. The thing that is still holding it together is Islam, American, Arab, British and European Aid, and the Heroin Trade. (Many of the biggest Traders are in Ms Bhutto's government). When Aid and Trade come in smaller doses, Pakistan will fall like a pack of cards.

Ms Bhutto indeed has problems a plenty. The peasants who form 79% of the population will go on being hungry while the middle-classes, 2%, will build larger houses or do their shopping in Harrods with aid and heroin money, or the money earned by the poor Pakistani guest-workers in the Middle East or Europe. Pakistan, which has the lowest literacy rate in Asia, will go on being illiterate. What can be done?

For a start, don't pretend that Bhutto came to power with a majority in the elections in 1970 because - it is a lie (what are the author's motives for promoting it?). Commemorate the murder of millions of Bengalis and rape of mothers, daughters and children. Examine why there is so much racial and religious hatred and envy.

Most of all work to eradicate the class which benefits from keeping 80% of the people illiterate, ignorant and hungry. Get rid of the Islamic facade and kiss Pakistan goodbye! (*)

Yours
Nazira B

AUTHOR'S REPLY: TRUE it is incorrect to say that Bhutto achieved an elected majority in 1970. I am sensible enough to admit to my mistake in stating such in that article.

I wholeheartedly agree that Pakistan has always suffered under a mainly Punjabi oligarchy, the most seriously exploited and oppressed being the Bengali population prior to the creation of Bangladesh.

The attrocities of the West Pakistani forces during the war of cecession are well known: countless killed, maimed, raped, industries destroyed, etc. I most certainly do not want to dismiss or try to ignore the murder of Bengalis, nor was there any 'motive' behind my genuine mistake.

I should like to see the whole of Asia free: free from the Bhuttos, Ershads, Ghandis, Zias and all the rest; free from all the landlords, exploiting bosses and murdering military and police.

What motive could there be for supporting any Bhutto? The Bhuttos have always been and always will be the symbol of exploitation under a "democratic" facade.

At present Benazir is doing nothing for the poor. The military and the 22 families continue to hold the power familiar to them. She is just a more "acceptable" face of exploitation and oppression, a sop to the wounds of the Pakistani poor, a continuing tool of U.S. imperialism, the landlords, and the rich of commerce and industry.

WE HAVE BEEN unable to include all the letters we have recieved in this issue, but we hope to be able to print them in the next one. If you could keep letters to about 250 word they will stand more chance of getting printed because we don't like having to edit them.

In future, letters must carry a name and address if the authors wants them published. (We don't - unless specifically asked - print your address in Organise!, but we may need to contact you ourselves). The letter in response to last issue's article on Pakistan had to be cut due to space, but because no address was supplied we could'nt contact the author concerning this. We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it and apologise if it occurs. Edited letters will be marked with *.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To acheive our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in the face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and economic and political colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist communist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to acheive anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

5. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions, however, are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to acheive a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours, so it is vital that we organise ourselves collectively.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we many acheive today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never acheive this, although rank-and-file initiatives may strengthen us for the battle for communism.

6. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creation of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

7. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.●

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF ORGANISE!:

* HOMEWORKING: We examine the growth in Britain, of an army of manufacturing workers, employed in their own homes, and we discuss the implications this has on traditional ideas of 'workplace organisation'.

* INSIDE THE I.M.F.: Who is in control of the International Monetary Fund, and how does it 'intervene' in the interests of world capitalism? What kinds of resistance are working class people waging against it, around the globe?

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Dockers prepare for battle

A FEW MONTHS ago, Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) boss Ron Todd was being dismissed aa a "dinosaur".

He was slammed for being resistant to change, blind to economic realities, and for being unable to cope with a new era in industrial relations.

But in the days immediately following the government's announcement that they planned to scrap the hard-fought-for National Dock Labour Scheme, all that changed.

Union

Todd found himself winning the praises of both Labour and Tory front benches for his handling of the dockers' angry reaction to the news.

Shadow Employment Secretary Michael Meacher applauded Todd's "responsibility, courage and restraint". Former Tory minister Michael Heseltine echoed these sentiments, adding that "we should welcome Todd's calming influence on events".

Dockers have long realised that an attack on the NDLS was inevitable. With the government determined to abolish "restrictive working practices" as part of its attempt to overhaul the British economy, it was simply a matter of time before attention was turned on the registered dockers.

As dockers in ports throughout the country responded to the news by staging immediate stoppages and walk-outs, most confidently expected the issuing of a national strike call within days to defend the scheme.

But the leadership of the TGWU had other ideas.

Todd stepped in to reassert union control over events, by endorsing the unofficial action and immediately ordering strikers back to work, promising that a national dock strike would follow an immediate ballot.

Having successfully suffocated the strike action, Todd won the backing of the Executive to postpone a ballot while he sought talks with the Port Employers, aimed at seeking an agreement "at least as favourable" as the existing NDLS.

This was a clear admission that the fight to save the Scheme had already been abandoned, and that the union was now looking to salvage what it could from the wreckage.

The Port Employers seemed genuinely surprised that this first round in the battle had been won so easily. They readily agreed to open-ended talks with the TGWU's

negotiating team, hoping to string the union out for several decisive weeks, allowing confusion and despondancy to spread throughout the docks.

In typical form, the Left decried this "sell-out" denouncing Todd's "capitulation", "backsliding" and "refusal to lead a fight".

In fact, Todd performed remarkably well in defending the union's interests. The mistaken belief that Todd had "sold-out" only makes sense if we equate the interests of the *union* with the interests of the *workers*.

From the start, the objectives of the dockers and of the union were at odds. The dockers concerns are to protect their jobs and defend their working conditions. They realise that scrapping the NDLS would herald a whole host of other attacks.

The union's fear is in losing a stable and secure arrangement with management, that weakens their mediating leverage and weakens their negotiating role. The union's real concern is to protect their "right to be consulted" over management reforms.

Any action that may be illegal could invite sequestration or punitive fines—threatening the union's existence. And because (as former TUC boss Lord Murray once observed) the first job of a union is to protect *itself*, it's in the union's own interest to police its membership and sabotage effective and illegal independent action.

It is for that reason—and not because of some abstract "cowardice"—that, if oa ballot over strike action *is* held in the coming weeks, the TGWU will *only* involve the 9,500 dockers covered by the scheme, will *not* sanction mass picketting, and will try to *stamp out* any attempts to spread the action to unregistered ports.

The difficulty the Laboour Party bureaucracy faces in offering even token "support" to the dockers struggle. is that they agree that scrapping the NDLS makes sound economic sense. As 1992 and the Single European Market approaches, British industry needs to push down port costs and remove obstacles to the flexible management of the workforce, if it is to compete efficiently in the international market place.

Mealy-mouthed Meacher admitted that a future Labour government would not reinstate the Scheme, but would examine the "new realities" in work practices in the docks.

Kinnock took issue, not with the theat to dockers jobs, but to the confrontational manner in which the Tories announced their plans. "Their are far better ways to acheive the necessary changes", he said, "than by provoking the dockers".

A Port Employers' secret strike-plan leaked to the press details the preparations they have made to weather what they describe as an "inevitable" strike". They count on action lasting a maximum of six weeks; and on the 35 non-Scheme ports—which currently handle around 30% of the total volume of trade —working normally.

Trade

They admit that if the strike were to last longer than eight weeks, or, if the non-Scheme ports or rail and road haulage networks were affected, it would "quickly start to bite". Priority-lists of goods essential to industry have already been drawn up, including plans to "maintain an adequate supply of newsprint" to ensure no interruption in the media propaganda war that would be waged against striking dockers.

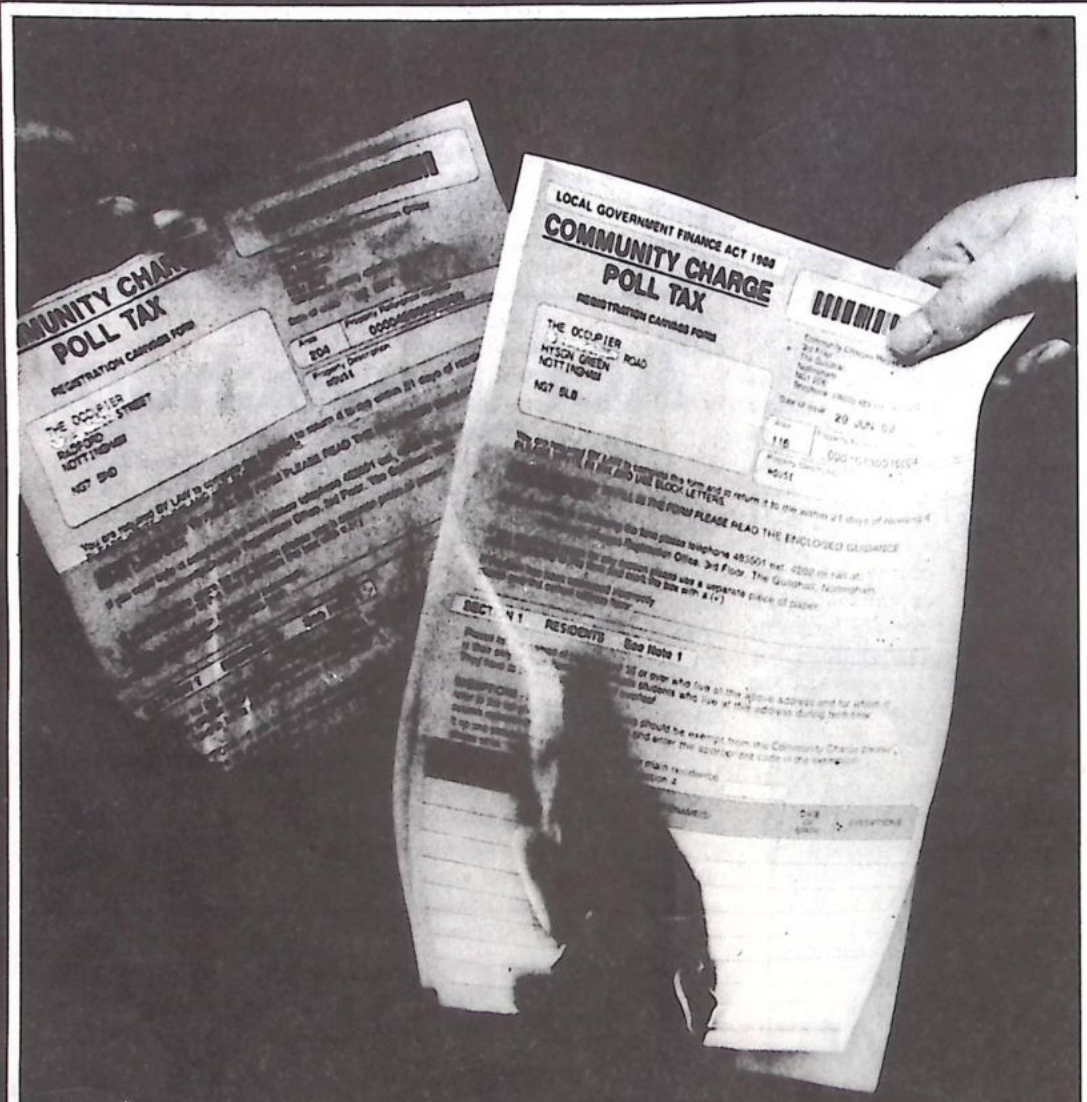
The rank and file dockers attempts to defend working conditions must be supported by active solidarity in all areas. The role the TGWU plays in keeping the lid on initiatives it doesn't control will prove once again the need for a revolutionary alternative to fighting the State by its own rules. •

T/SOR/16/2

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

30p
Aug-Oct
1989
Issue 16



POLL TAX
A BURNING ISSUE

WOMEN HOME WORKERS

POLAND: SOLIDARITY STITCH-UP

INDUSTRIAL UPTURN

FRIENDS OF DURRUTI

CHINA IN CRISIS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. It's structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the following areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Bradford Chesterfield, Coventry, Co. Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Kent, Liverpool, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Reading, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Wokingham and York.

We have internal groupings around the following industries and interests:

Health, Education, Unemployed, Postal, Students, Local Government, Community Youth Work and Women.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist communist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 125, Coventry, CV3 5QT.

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ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate in depth debates on areas not normally covered by agitiational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and other open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise!, and as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles, we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the November issue are September 15th for features and reviews, and September 29th for letters and the news section.

All contributions to the next issue of Organise! should be sent to: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosega e, Hockley, Nottingham.

ACF Dayschool

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON WC1
Saturday December 2nd 1989
(Nearest tube Holborn)
10.00am to 6.00pm

A day school organised by the ACF, open to all those interested in the ideas of anarchist-communism.

Full list of workshops and subjects to be covered will appear in the November issue of Organise!.

Creche provided. Disabled access. Light refreshments.

Write for further details (and advance tickets) to: ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

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PRESS FUND

SADLY WE CAN'T report a repeat of our first successful Press Fund appeal.

That brought in an amazing response, easily taking us past our initial £250 target.

But this time, as our July 20th deadline past, we'd had in less than £100 - not even taking us half way there.

Our thanks go to all those readers, subscribers and supporters who did send in donations - the money will go straight towards meeting our production, printing and postage costs.

But this makes it all the more important that we reach the next £250 target with this August-October issue. Especially because - as you can see - we've four extra pages in this issue, to allow space for all the features we wanted to include.

If you think Organise! - and other ACF publications - are worth supporting, please make a donation to our press appeal. We can't consider publishing a larger, or more frequent, Organise! without such extra financial support.

Please send all donations as soon as possible to: ACF Press Fund, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockely, Nottingham NG1. We need to reach our target by October 20th. Let's go to it!

An upsurge of action

A WAVE OF industrial action has hit Britain with recent strikes by railway, underground, local council, BBC, dock and oil rig workers.

The strength and solidarity of much of the action has been impressive and inspiring.

But despite the upsurge in strike activity, there are few signs as yet of the isolated, sectional disputes being forged into a more generalised struggle.

This is all the more frustrating at present when practically all the disputes currently being waged are over identical issues :

* pay offers below the rate of inflation - in effect pay cuts.

* the breaking up of national agreements over bargaining and conditions - to divide and isolate workers in the same industries.

* the introduction of flexible work patterns and the ending of traditional job demarcation lines.

But despite the lack of co-ordination and unity, there have been some very encouraging developments.

Unofficial action by tube and oil rig workers has clearly shown workers' ability to by-pass the union and really hit the employers.

Unofficial

Tube workers saw clearly that the best way to maximize the impact of their strike action against the 'Action Stations' plan, and link up with the struggles of train drivers, was to come out on the same day - paralysing London's transport network. London bus crews - involved in a 'seperate dispute' - joined the action, until a quick settlement by their union put an end to such unity.

Despite their union's attempt to keep the two group of workers isolated, an unofficial strike committee was able to bring the tube network to a near total standstill time and again.

On the oil rigs in recent months there have been a whole series of strikes, occupations and sit-ins on the platforms - much of it organised outside the off-shore unions - who even now only represent a minority of platform workers. Sub-contracted construction workers - not traditionally seen as a militant group - have been in the forefront of the action.

Sparked

An unofficial Offshore Industries Liasion (OIL) committee, has co-ordinated most of the strikes, many have which have been sparked off on one rig, and spread - through radio calls for solidarity - to other rigs in the field.

The exact nature of the OIL committee is difficult to work out at this stage. It is clearly an attempt to go beyond the sectional divisions of specific trade unions, and unite all workers in the field around common demands for better safety, higher wages, etc.

But whether it sees itself as an action-based, open workers' organisation (instead of a union) or as a temporary stop-gap, treading water while "real" workers' organisations - ie trade unions - are built, isn't clear.

Oil workers who for years were ignored by the traditional trade unions, must push for the rank and file strike committees not to be submerged into union structures.

On the docks, attempts by the rank and file to get industrial action underway before the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme, were repeatedly sabotaged by Todd's officials who ordered ports - particularly non-scheme ports - to keep working normally because the dispute was "nothing to do with them".

The endless delays over court action, and 'talks about talks' to negotiate a replacement scheme, allowed the employers time to launch a counter-offensive - including an 11th-hour offer of massive redundancy payments, that drew 1400 away from the strike, and deepened the demoralisation of the remaining dockers.

With the official strike now at last underway, there seem few signs as yet of dockers willing to ignore Todd's orders to 'stay put' at their ports and spread the action through flying pickets.

The upsurge in action - particularly the unofficial action - has rattled the Tories, who've announced plans for a new battery of anti-worker legislation.

The proposals include:

* Making unions liable for the actions of their members: official or unofficial - to ensure that unions police wildcat action more effectively.

* Introducing a compulsory "cooling off" period after a successful strike ballot, before any action can be taken. (This is something the unions could easily support - allowing them more time for 'negotiation' before having to use the 'last resort' of industrial action).

* the outlawing of strikes in 'essential services'.

As the Tories intensify their attacks, our response must be to unify the struggles and fight on generalised class demands. We need to overcome the divisions of trade, union and workplace and forge solidarity between groups of workers.

In supporting those struggles we must continually highlight the divergence of interest between the union and the workers, and show that successful action is built despite, not because of, trade unionism.●

Poles apart

WHILE THE CHINESE authorities have unleashed the military beast on students and workers, their Polish colleagues have resorted to a more subtle - and perhaps more effective - means of spiking the opposition.

Adam Michnik, editor of Solidarity's daily paper, is now calling for the opposition union to form the next government, in return for which it should support the Communist Party's candidate for President.

This is likely to be General Kiszczak, Minister of the Interior and head of the secret police. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, the Papal hand-kisser, supports his candidacy too.

During the seven years since General Jaruzelski installed a state of emergency, a section of Solidarity has allied with the so-called 'reforming wing' of the Communist Party to form a 'centrist' group to push for co-government between the

(Continued over, page 4)

Poles apart

Continued from page 3

Party and sections of Solidarity.

The 'Communists' have agreed to this not out of liberalism, but because they hope to gain from such concessions. The 'Communist' system (read state capitalist) not only in Poland, but throughout the Eastern Bloc is going through a deep economic and technological crisis. The 'Communist' leaderships have taken the decision to give the opposition some 'rights' in exchange for an acceptance of the regime and the guarantee that the opposition won't threaten economic interests.

This 'constructive' opposition in Solidarity will be given the task of replacing the present 'Communist' propaganda - now totally discredited - with a 'propaganda of opposition' which will attempt to persuade the working class not to defend its own interests for the sake of the 'national good'.

During the seven years of Jaruzelski, the 'constructive' group proclaimed itself the leadership of Solidarity, whilst ignoring working class interests. As a result a group in opposition to Walesa and the 'constructives' emerged, known as the Group of Labour.

It is not a united group, and includes those who support Christian-Democrat (conservative) positions and those who could be described as trade unionists and syndicalists.

Typical

This is typical of Solidarity, which from the start saw itself as an organisation of multiple views. In meetings and assemblies - both at the factory level and in the national commission - wide differences of opinion were to be found, often bitter and sometimes violent. No one group or point of view has a majority and therefore no-one can be considered as speaking for Solidarity as a whole.

Walesa has attempted to override this state of affairs, accusing those in Solidarity who disagree with him of being agents for the regime, of having no experience of struggle, or of fleeing abroad when the state of emergency was announced.

In autumn 1988, Walesa forbid any public announcements by the Group of Labour. In a televised debate with the leader of the official unions OPZZ he stated that Solidarity was ready to make sacrifices and to 'roll up its sleeves'.

In other words, he accepted work speed-ups and longer work-hours, a fall in the standard of living, and further price rises.

Since the state of emergency, all of the national bodies of Solidarity, the Provisional Council (TRS) and the executive national commission (KKW) which up to then were elected posts became nominated positions - contrary to Solidarity's statutes.

These moves by Walesa and his group were supported by the radio stations funded by the United States and their allies. Interviews given by the Group of Labour to US journalists were sent first to the KKW for approval, before they could be broadcast.

The 'constructive' group is now being seen more and more clearly by many Polish working people as a group that has betrayed the interests it set itself to defend. Walesa's group will attempt to create unions no different from the official unions OPZZ. Many of those workers who ignored the OPZZ, are certain to give the new ones a wide berth. Walesa may succeed in creating these unions from above, but with few members.

Anarchism

However, it is not enough to defend the immediate day-to-day interests of the working class. The Group of Labour has no shared political outlook, and this highlights the deep crisis of ideas that now exists in Poland.

Ideas that challenge the whole foundation of the Polish system, which reject both market and state capitalism, have to be developed.

Already, the Polish anarchist movement, destroyed in the turmoil of the 30s and 40s has re-emerged, and is beginning to grow.

This is a good omen for the construction of a mass movement that will reject both the Walesa group and the 'Communist' government, and move towards the goal of a new society.●

*NEXT ISSUE: We examine the emerging anarchist movements in Poland, Hungary and the USSR.

POLL TAX

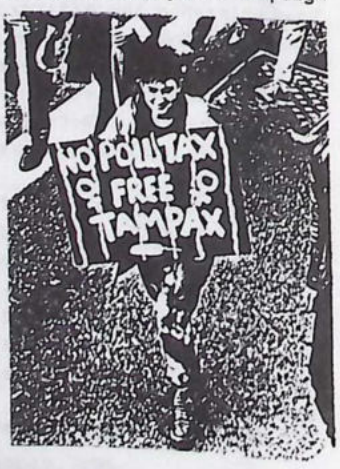
Mass non-payment takes off

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS of ordinary working class people are still flatly refusing to pay their first poll tax demands - over three months after the bills were sent out.

Though patchy and uneven, a mass country-wide campaign of non-payment has been built in Scotland, through the work of anti-poll tax unions. The months ahead now promise a fierce battle between an increasingly confident and independent working class campaign and the labour authorities who control nearly all Scotland's local councils.

The arrival or registration forms on doormats throughout England and Wales, has, in many areas, acted as a catalyst to kick local campaigns into action - giving a sense of urgency and impetus to the struggle.

The exact strength of the Scottish non-payment campaign is difficult to gauge at this stage - largely because in region after region the poll tax colection machinery is in chaos, with tens of thousands of 'payment books' yet be be posted, and people waiting over four months for the rebate applications to be processed. The struggle to frustrate registration has compounded the councils' problems - with many regions unable to claim that they have even a roughly accurate working list of those liable to pay. Stories abound of babies, children and the long deceased receiving demands for payment.



David Conley, Glasgow council's director of housing, has conceded that until "the basic administration is in place, we can't even consider action against non-payers". Strathclyde region is "because of the problems that have bedevilled us - nowhere near being able to give figures for those who are refusing to pay".

A secret Lothian regional council memo shows the extent of concern in local authorities over the non-payment campaign. They fully expect to have to take 100,000 people (out of a total of 680,000) to court to try to enforce payment.

In the best organised areas, bailiffs are being sent away empty handed from the homes of working class families - by anti-poll tax 'reception committees' who physically prevent the seizure

(Continued on page 18) ❱

'Don't abandon the streets!'

The Friends of Durruti, and the events of May 1937 in Barcelona

"Over the Telephone exchange
the Anarchist Flag had been
hauled down and only the Catalan
flag was flying.
That meant that the workers
were definitely beaten."

- George Orwell
Homage to Catalonia

THE EVENTS OF May 1937 in Barcelona, during the Spanish revolution, were sparked off by an attack on the central telephone exchange in the town, controlled by a joint committee of the CNT (the Anarcho-syndicalist union) and the UGT (the socialist union).

The attack was led by the Commmunist police commissioners at the head of Assault Guards. The reason given for the attack was that the CNT listened in on all conversations between the Catalan regional government, the Catalan Generalitat, and abroad.

In response, barricades went up, and rank and file members of the POUM (the anti-Stalinist communists who had split with Trotsky in 1934) fought alongside anarchist workers against the forces of the PSUC and the Generalitat. The CNT-FAI leadership, far from supporting resistance to what appeared to Catalan workers to be a provocation, called for a laying down of arms. The revolutionary Friends of Durruti group called for resistance to the Stalinist provocation, and the setting up of revolutionary councils. Five hundred dead and a thousand wounded resulted from the five days of fighting. It has been seen as the beginning of the end for the social revolution developing in Catalonia and Aragon.

In works detailing the events of May 1937 the Friends of Durruti appear again and again. Yet very often little description of their numbers, influence or political platform is given.

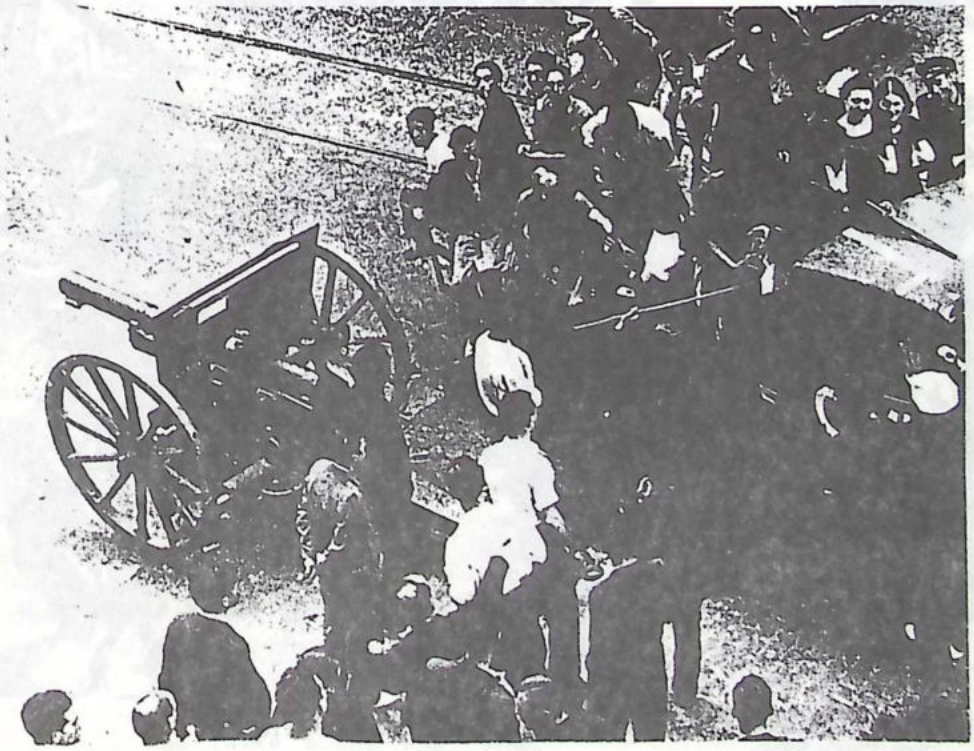
For example, in Peirats' history of Spanish anarchism we read: "The relative unimportance of its members, POUM participation, and the marxist flavour of some of its communiques, all served to dilute the real influence of the 'Friends of Durruti'"(1). Thomas (2) (a right-wing bourgeois historian), in a footnote calls them: "bolshevik-anarchists, in the sense that they wanted to capture power, not the dissolution of the state. They were Leninists without being Marxists, if that is possible."

Charges

Apart from the charges of marginalisation, unconscious Leninism with a flavour of Marxism, we must consider other allegations - that they were led by the Italian anarchist Berneri; that they were Stalinist agents (according to the CNT leadership); and that they were fascist agents (according to the communist parties). We must also examine the views of Morrow (a supporter of the Trotskyist Fourth International), who implies that there was a working relationship between the Friends of Durruti and the Bolshevik-Leninists, Spanish section of the Trotskyist Fourth International.

Sometimes there is the distinct impression in the pages of Morrow that the Bolshevik-Leninists were in the vanguard, dragging the Friends of Durruti behind them in the May actions (3). This view is echoed in other Trotskyist publications. To give Morrow his due, the book is one of the view that attaches any importance to the Friends of Durruti group.

Vernon Richards, an anarchist strongly critical of CNT partici-



pation in the Republican government was also to question the marginalisation of the Friends of Durruti. He cites Peirats himself contradicting the above-quoted passage in another work (4). Peirats here talks about "an important section of opinion" in opposition to the CNT leadership, at the head of whom were the 'Friends of Durruti'".

He describes this group as based on elements who were hostile to militarisation of the militias (where the revolutionary self-discipline and abscence of hierarchy was being replaced by rigid officer/soldier ranks, and hierarchical discipline), many of whom left the units of the newly-formed Popular Army when then voluntary militias were dissolved.

Devotes

Richards notes that it is "especially regretted that to this 'important section of opinion' the historiographer of the CNT devotes but eighteen lines" (5).

It does seem surprising that very little has been written on the Friends of Durruti if indeed they were at the head of an important section of opinion.

Recent publications have thrown some light on this shadowy group. A recent translation (6) of a Friends of Durruti manifesto reveals the aims of the group. This Manifesto was published clandestinely in mid-1938, a year after the May days.

It identifies itself as the authentic voice of the CNT rank and file and counters allegation of provocation:

"They labelled us agents provocateurs because we demanded that provocateurs be shot, that the armed forces be disbanded, that political parties who had armed the provocation be surpressed, and also that a revolutionary junta be established, to press on with the socialisation of the economy and to claim all economic power for the unions". (7)

It called for a further revolution that:

"Would bring urban and rural workers complete satisfaction."

It talks of the death of Nin - the POUM leader - believed murdered by the communist secret police, at a time of general silence on the subject.

Apart from the Friends of Durruti Manifesto, translations of important extracts from their paper El Amigo del Pueblo ("The Friend of the People") have appeared in French. And, surprisingly, some correspondence with a Scottish revolutionary group during 1937-38 has again seen the light of day.

Militant

The Friends of Durruti seem to have been made up of predominantly younger members of the CNT and FAI (the Iberian Anarchist Federation, formed to defend anarchism within the CNT and numbering 30,000 members in 1936). One leading light was an editor of El Amigo del Pueblo, Jaime Balius, who had come into the libertarian movement during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Others were: the libertarian youth militant Santano Calero; Carreno and Ruiz - close collaborators of the dead anarchist militant Durruti; and Ponciano Alonso - a writer of the

Republican assault guards sent to crush the May rebellion.

"novels of the idea" popular in CNT-FAI circles before 1936.

Peirats' admission that many of the Friends were militants from the Durruti Column is backed up by a statement by Balius to Fraser (8) (a British communist historian) in 1976, where he says that the group was formed of members of the Durruti Column who had returned to Barcelona - with their arms - to protest against the militarisation decrees.

It seems unlikely with these pedigrees that the Friends of Durruti were either fascists or stalinist provocateurs.

One other major allegation - that the group was small and had little effect - has been examined. Balius himself claimed that the group has the support of the CNT-FAI grassroots, and of many of the anarchist militia on the Aragon front (9).

Chueca, prominent in the Council of Aragon, and Jover, one of the militia column leaders, are recorded as having made donations to El Amigo del Pueblo, as did groups like the "X Group" on the Aragon front (10). Peirats himself - perhaps a little reluctantly - seems to admit a certain amount of support.

Another allegation makes out the Friends of Durruti to be a small group. Balius estimates membership at between 4,000 - 5,000 (11). This is the only solid figure that we have. Definitions of 'small' may vary, but if the figure is to be believed, such a number of militants concentrated mainly in Barcelona could have a decisive effect on events.

Attacked

The POUM member Wilebaldo Solano (12) admits that it was the Friends of Durruti who had "mobilised the people when the Telefonica was attacked, it was they who had the arms and were first to man the barricades."

In the course of the May Days they published a leaflet and a manifesto that appears to have been warmly welcomed by the workers (13). The text of the leaflet is terse - dictated by the critical situation:

"CNT-FAI. Friends of Durruti Group. Workers. Don't abandon the street. Revolutionary Junta. Execution of those responsible. Disarming of the armed forces. Socialisation of the economy. Dissolving of the political parties who have attacked the working class. We salute the POUM comrades who have fraternised with us in the street. Long live the Social Revolution."

It can be seen from the above, and by many statements in their leaflets and paper, that the Friends saw themselves as an oppositional current within the CNT-FAI, loyal to the organisations, but hostile to the vacillations and compromises of leading members. For example in Number 3 of the paper, in bold letters:

"The Friends of Durruti association is made up of militants of the CNT and FAI. Only the union assemblies can expel us from the Confederal organisation. The meetings of delegates of local and cantonal organisation do not have the power to exclude a comrade. We demand that the committees pose the question of the 'Friends of Durruti' in the assemblies, there, where lies the sovereignty of the organisation." (14)

What should be made of the allegation that 'POUM participation' neutralised the position of the Friends, and in the process assimilated them to 'Trotskyism' in the eyes of the CNT 'leadership'?

The allegations that the POUM was Trotskyist have been dealt with in detail (and discounted) in most current works on the Spanish Civil War. The POUM rank and file had come out onto the barricades, and won the respect of the Friends. Up till then "relations with the POUM had been notably cool". (15)

The POUM leadership had no confidence in the Friends and acted in the same way as the CNT-FAI leadership in demobilising the workers.

Some Trotskyists have attempted to use the allegation that the Friends of Durruti were Trotskyist to maintain that indeed there were close links between them and the Bolshevik-Leninists, and that the Friends were evolving towards Trotskyism.

Morrow attempts this in his book, when he talks about the relations of the Trotskyist militants Moulin and Franz Heller with the Friends. (16)

In Number 10 of Cahiers Leon Trotsky (published by the French Institut du Leon Trotsky) a study by F. M. Arando has appeared on the Friends of Durruti, attempting to show close collaboration. The sole tangible evidence, however, is that several 'Friends of Durruti' (unnamed) met with one Trotskyist, the German Hans Davis Freund, known under the pseudonym of Moulin. Nothing is said about this meeting. In the same edition (p82) Pierre Broue (author with Temime of a major work on the Civil War and Revolution) admits that the Friends turned down a meeting to discuss common action. Morrow seems to exagerate the importance of the Bolshevik-Leninists, when estimates of their numbers range from as few as six, to as many as twenty.

Having established that there were few real contacts between the Trotskyists and the Friends, we have to deal with 'the Marxist flavour' of Peirats, and the 'unconcious Leninism' of Thomas. These statements seem to be based on the advancement of the concept of the 'Revolutionary Junta'.

Masses

Junta - a word of Spanish origin - has connotations of military dictatorship in English. In Spanish, there are other meanings. 'Junta' is used by libertarians to imply a revolutionary committee under the control of the masses.

What the Friends are saying, in fact, is that bourgeois power must be smashed. They talk of the "crushing" of "social-democratic centralism" (17) in Number 5 of their paper, and in Number 4 of the abolition of hierarchies, and finally, in Number 7 we can find the statement that:

"The state machine suffocates and ends up by creating new promotions of the privileged..."

Hardly a Leninist viewpoint, and Marxists, with their 'blind spot' on the role of the State, are rarely seen to take such a critical view.

Continued over

Balius (18) clarifies that position of the Friends:

"We did not support the formation of the Soviets: there were no grounds in Spain for calling for such. We stood for 'all power to the trade unions'. In no way were we politically oriented. The junta was simply a way out, a revolutionary formula to save the revolutionary conquests of July 1936. We were unable to exercise great influence because the Stalinists, helped by the CNT and FAI reformists, undertook their counter-revolutionary aggression so rapidly. Ours was solely an attempt to save the revolution; at an historical level it can be compared to Kronstadt because if there the sailors called for 'all power to the Soviets', we were calling for 'all power to the unions'."

Statist

Balius uses 'political' to mean parliamentarian, and statist - a common anarchist understanding of the word.

One final allegation was that the Friends were led by Camillo Berneri, a gifted Italian anarchist in exile. This was alleged by the Communists (as, for example, in Grido del Popolo, the Italian Communist paper). Berneri by his own admission adopted a 'centrist' position between the Friends and the CNT leadership, and was never a member of the Friends - though the latter did publish his thesis against militarisation.

The Friends of Durruti, it would appear, were authentic rank and file militants of the CNT-FAI seeking a way out of the dilemmas posed by militarisation and the attacks of the Communists and the bourgeois Republicans. They appear to have had a significant role in mobilsing workers during the May Days, though their influence was far from strong enough to counter that of the CNT-FAI leadership.

They were willing to accept the POUM rank and file as allies, as the result of practical solidarity on the barricades.

The charges that they were marginal, too closely tied to the POUM, were Stalinist or Fascist provocateurs, were Leninists or Marxist, are either the result of lack of information, or a wilful misinterpretation by Trotskyists or Stalinists, or those who seek to defend the reformist CNT leadership.

The Friends of Durruti were a brave attempt to reassert and defend the gains made by the Spanish revolution, and represent an important episode in the history of revolutionary anarchism.

The Spanish libertarian movement, faithful to certain aspects of Bakuninism, but infiltrated by moral and cultural notions closer to liberal humanism than revolutionary analysis, had not totally ignored anarchism outside Spain. But fixed on its traditional anarchist credo, it hardly took account of ideas developing in the international movement.

In this context, the Friends of Durruti, from the first day caught up in the revolutionary struggle, made a bold attempt to break with the dead weight of the past.

But it was too late, and the development of their ideas was to end with the crushing of the Spanish revolution. They had not broken with the revolutionary romanticism that gripped the Spanish movement, nor with a hero-cult towards Durruti.

They had a pronounced taste for simplification common in the Spanish movement. Also, we would now criticise them for attempting to base libertarian communism upon a syndicalist form.

Though they talked about the setting up of revolutionary councils this was too often confused with the anarcho-syndicalist unions, and they were unable to go beyond the extreme-left of anarcho-syndicalism.

Even as regards the construction of a specific anarchist organisation they stuck to the old conspiritorial and romantic ideas of the FAI of 1927, and though they rejected the new FAI structures of 1937 - which led to the dilution of the anarchist organisation - they were only able to offer the small 'affinity group' as an alternative.

On the other hand, they saw that the War could not be won without the strengthening of the revolution, unlike the CNT-FAI leadership who put the War before the revolution.

They saw the immediate need to destroy the state apparatus and replace it with working class organisation. They defended the importance of class analysis, and denounced the theoretical confusion and improvisation that was also common in the Spanish movement.•

NOTES:

(1) Peirats, p215
(2) Thomas, p656
(3) Morrow, p191, "Only the small forces of the Bolshevik-Leninists, who had been expelled as 'Trotskyists' from the POUM, and had formed their organisation in the Spring of 1937 - only this small band, working under the three-fold illegality of the state, the Stalinist and the CNT-POUM leadership, clearly pointed the road for the workers. Not only for the ultimate road of the worker's state, but the immediate task of defending the democratic rights of the workers."
(4) La CNT en la Revolucion Espanola. 3 vols (Toulouse 1951,1952,1953).
(5) Richards, p131
(6) Towards a Fresh Revolution (Cienfuegos Press).
(7) ibid, p28
(8) Fontenis (see bibliography).
(9) Class War on the Homefront (see bibliography).
(10) ibid, p39
(11) The Spanish Revolution, Bolleton.
(12) Fraser, p381
(13) see Morrow, Fontenis
(14) Fontenis, p26
(15) Fraser, p381
(16) Morrow, p292
(17) Fontenis, p40
(18) Fraser, p381

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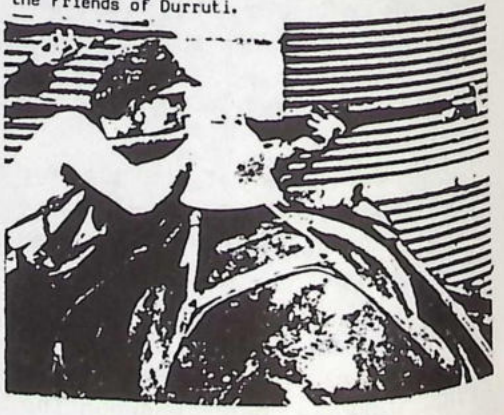

HOMEWORKERS:
An invisible workforce

"DUST, DUST AND more dust. That was the story of my life working as an overlocker. All over the walls and floors, and in the cupboards. It's amazing where it used to get to.

I remember well how my lungs used to ache. I never knew if it was all the dust I was inhaling, or the stooped position I sat in for hours on end. The pay was appalling too! The whole thing was hellish."

This Leicestershire hosiery worker isn't describing the nightmarish condiitions she endured slaving in some dingy, back-street sweat shop. She's talking about conditions she was forced to put up with working in her own front room - as one of the growing army of homeworkers: an invisible workforce whose numbers have swelled to over a million in the last decade in the UK.

Her story of low-pay and ill-health is typical of the experiences of tens of thousands of working class women all over the country who are now working from home.

Increase

Their numbers are set to increase still further, as more and more firms look to 'homeworking' (or 'outworking' as it it is also refered to) as an alternative to traditional factory-based production.

Many kinds of simple manufacturing, assembly and packing work can easily be farmed out to homeworkers - particularly 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled' work, that doesn't require complex machinery.

Homeworkers produce clothing, toys, household furnishings, cleaning materials, fireworks, shoes. They stuff and address envelopes, pack catalogues, peel and prepare vegetables. Without exception, homeworkers work on 'piece rates' - only being paid for what they produce, and the rates, of course, are appalling.

The Hussain family from Yorkshire were paid between £3 and £5 for packing 1000 greetings cards. It took the family of four more than an hour to pack the first 1000. "We did about four days works, spending every evening on the packing. We earned about £29 in all - for the four of us".

Such stories are typical: Saroj from Birmingham sews pockets on trousers for 90p a pair - she works 56 hours per week for around £20-25. Fatima, from the East End of London, was paid 45p for sewing a skirt, that later sold in Top Shop for £10. Another worker earned £8.50 for 35 hours work knitting a jumper that was to retail at £80.

It's not hard to see the advantages homeworking offers the bosses.

First, there are the obvious savings on factory costs - from rent and heat, to providing a canteen, to meeting health and safety requirements.

Secondly , and more importantly, homeworking breaks up what would otherwise be a mass workforce, centralised in a few factories, into hundreds of seperate, isolated, individual workers.

Through atomizing the workforce in this way, homeworking hampers the ability of workers to join forces to fight for common interests.

When workers are gathered together under the same factory roof, they have the ability to take direct collective action at the point of production. Homeworkers - scattered and invisible even to each other - do not.

Co-workers

Hundreds of homeworkers living in the same town, will, initially, be unaware even of how many other workers are employed by the same company locally, doing identical work. They will have no idea if the terms and conditions they work under are the same as co-workers in neighbouring streets. And they won't know whether attacks on those working conditions are general to the

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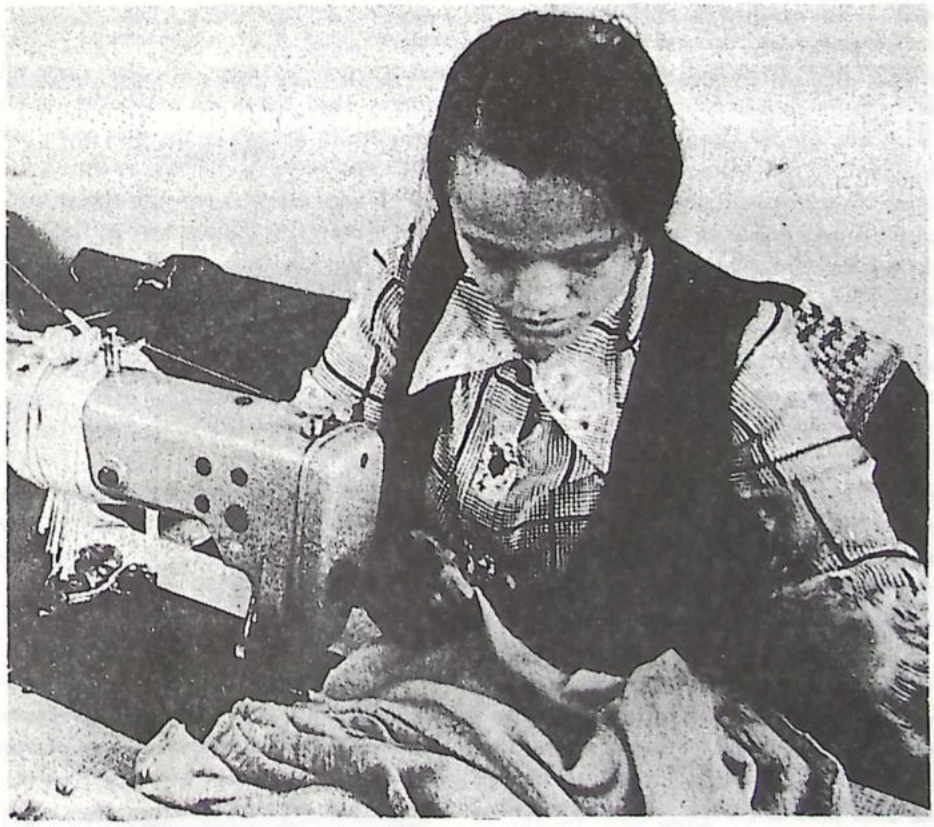


IMF: Imperialist Masters of Finance

EARLIER THIS YEAR Venezuala erupted. People took to the streets, armed and unarmed, to engage in "IMF" riots. This is not a new form of activity, but one practised almost everywhere the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has used its knife. 300 were killed, and 2000 injured when the poor engaged, effectively, in civil war against uncivil price rises. Increases of 90% on petrol, and 30% on bus fares rightly angered people where, even after wage rises forced by the riots, the minumum wage is £60 a month.

As always, it is the workers who are being forced to pay. As one angry student asked of the loans being negotiated by the government : why should we pay for things we never saw or enjoyed? As supermarkets were being stripped by mothers, they stated a simple fact : our children have to eat.

Debt

Venezuala has about £19 billion in foreign debt. The last President left the treasury devoid of foreign currency. A $3.4 billion IMF loan has been agreed with strict conditions - price rises and financial controls being among them. In other words, the poor will get poorer.

Prior to the price rises their income had already lost around a fifth of its value over the preceeding decade. Paying foreign debts means less food for the poor because government subsidies disappear under the IMF knife.

The whole of Latin America is teetering on the edge. $30 billion flows from the region to the "advanced capitalist" countries each year. In other words, the poor are paying for the privilege of that poverty.

We have seen the spectacle of food riots in Argentina - the poor are going hungry, raiding supermarkets to feed themselves and their families in the face of huge inflation. Brazil is facing the same problem, with inflation running at 100%, and those at the bottom left to live as best they can scavenging or starving in the shanty towns.

Inflation is truly a disease - a disease of capital - the victims being the poor, those who receive the IMF "cure" for the well-being of the "needy" boss and middle classes.

Late in April, Jordan also saw the outbreak of IMF riots. Unusually, the rioters were not from the 65% Palestinian population. Price rises of 15-50% demanded by the IMF were the cause. The result was simply the sacking of the Prime Minister, not an attack upon the root causes of the problem.

The root of the problem is that the Hashemite rulers have ridden the easy road by using Saudi aid given because Jordan is a frontline state against Israel, and they have used this for their own wealth and power, not for any for any real benefit for the people.

Now King Hussein has cut his support for the Palestinians, both inside and outside of the present borders, and the price has to be paid. The price is austerity for the poor, and wealth and security for the rich.

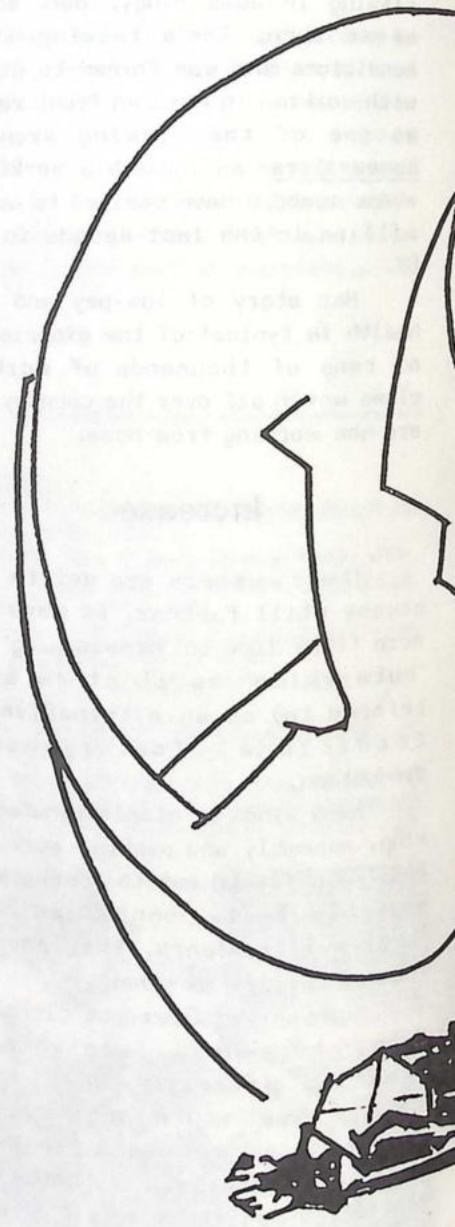
We know how the poor of these countries oppose the IMF and the World Bank. They fight the Governments who impose IMF rules. They take what they can when they can. But what of Europe ?

Berlin

Berlin, 1988 : 140 finance ministers, 10,000 delegates of banks, industries, managers, plus wives and bodyguards - 20,000 in all - met to discuss their profit in the "Third World". 14,000 members of the security forces mobilised to protect them.

Alongside this a counter-conference was organised on the 23rd-25th of September. 3000 people attended, many of them reformists, and some attended from the "Third World". Whilst there are plenty in left and liberal circles who argue for a New International Economic Order, the counter-conference realised that it is necessary to go further.

Consequently there were calls not just for the scrapping of the debt, but also for a change in the economic relations in the world, and for the payment of reparations to the "Third World". They realised that it will be necessary



to break the hold of the imperialist centre (USA, EEC, Japan) over the world economy, and the need for social upheavals in these centres.

The counter-conference, however, was unfortunately limited, being accessible only to those who could afford the £7 fee, and could afford to travel to Berlin. There was a lone voice for the reform of the World Bank, but the most radical voices were heard from those areas most affected by IMF policies.

Many went beyond the organisers' limitations, and called for imaginative direct action, the destruction of exploitation and oppression, and not just for a simple and limited discussion.

* Women demonstrated against the restriction of their being limited to taking only part time work in the "Third World".

* There was a demonstration in front of a pharmaceutical group's HQ against their involvement in "Third World" birth control and genetic research.

* Bankers were harrassed as they went to "work".

* 8000 people demonstrated as internationalists, on the principle that the division of the world is not between "Third World" and "advanced" countries, but really between the upper and lower classes throughout the whole world.

* 80,000 people demonstrated against the IMF conference on the 25th, in solidarity with Palestinians, Kanaks, Phillipinos, South Koreans etc.

* There was much street-theatre, street games and music.

The basis for all these oppositional events was a call not for the gradual change of a system which is unjust in part of its activities, but for the destruction of the whole system. A system which is by its very nature supporting and nourishing the exploitation of the many by the few.

Together

The call was, and still is, for the creation of a movement to unite the forces of the poor throughout the world against their esentially racist exploiters.

The call is for the unity of women against the patriarchal-imperialist system. Each call came from this understanding - that the IMF and the World Bank are just two faces of the same system that exploits and oppresses the majority of us, whether we are women, black, working or not.●

Much of this article has been taken from the magazine of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL).

What is the International Monetary Fund?

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY Fund (IMF) was established in 1944 at Breton Worde (USA), along with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank, IBRD). The aim was for the major world powers to be able to guard against the problems which had occurred in the inter-war years - the Soviet Union was also involved at first, but left after increasing disagreements.

The IMF was created basically to counter the balance of payments problems, arising out of trade deficits, that had plagued the capitalist world prior to the Second World War. The IBRD was established to see to the long term problems of the destruction caused by the war itself, later looking to the problems of the "Third World" and development issues.

The IMF is run by a cartel of the major capitalist nations, the USA being at the very top. Voting power is essentially bought, as the quotas which fund the IMF also define the quantity of votes available to each contributing nation. The head of the IMF is always American*.

The central ideas, and the basic policies of the IMF are, and always have been, the central ideas of the USA and the policies most in keeping with US interests. The USA, after all, has influence over 80% of the votes. The interests of the USA and the other major nations are obviously not the same as the interests of the poorer nations, let alone the interests of the poor the world over.

* The USA has 20% of the vote, Western Europe 28%. For major changes to be actioned, an 85% majority vote is required, therefore the USA has the power of veto. The poorer nations directly control only 34% of the vote.

《Continued from page 9

whole workforce, or whether the company is targetting small sections, or even individuals.

Homeworking also has the advantage of allowing management to isolate themselves from the workforce. Homeworkers have no direct contact with even lower level bosses - like production managers and supervisors. The only contact they have with the company strucutre at all, may be with the driver of the van who delivers and collects their work.

A totally individualised workforce, unaware even of its own size and strength, and knowing next to nothing about the bosses who exploit it - what could me more ideal? Such a situation that allows management almost complete 'flexibility' to hire and fire at will; drive down wages; change terms and conditions; switch production; and, if required shut down operations and move them wholesale to another town or country. And all of this without any interference from workers' organisations.

Labour

In the past, many multinational companies centred their assembly and basic manufacturing work in 'Third World' countries, where costs (including wages) are cheap, and workers' organisation poor. Now British and European homeworkers are becoming part of those same pools of labour - their wages low, their organisation poor. All those workers are prone to exactly the same attacks - withdrawal of work, cuts in wages - as transnationals switch production around the globe in search of the cheapest costs at a given time.

But if the benefits for the boss class in promoting homeworking are so clear, and the position of homeworkers so precarious and exploited, why has there been such an explosion in the numbers employed in this way?

In a recent TV interview, one employer explained that it was a mistake to think of homeworking as "real, full-time, bread-winning employment". He claimed that the women employed by his hosiery firm were working "to earn themselves a bit of pin-money to supplement their husband's income".

The economic reality that homeworkers themselves describe is somewhat different.

As the recession has deepened over the last ten years, unemployment has rocketted - driving tens of thousands out of the traditional labour market. This has particularly badly affected working class women. The Thatcherite drive to return to 'Victorian values', has further pushed working class women back 'into the home'. What pitiful levels of nursery and creche provision that did exist for working class families has in most cases disappeared in wave after wave of council cutbacks, and, combined with the clsoure of nursing homes and hospital wards, has forced many women to return home to look after children or care for elderly relatives.

So, many working class women have needed to find employment that can combine earning a wage, caring full-time for children/ relatives, and running a home. Homeworking provides just that.

For many working class families, homeworking becomes the only means to bring in a desperately needed second wage. It's not a case of earning pocket money, but of finding a way to make ends meet.

As well as their division and isolation, other obstacles stand in the way of homeworkers organising together collectively to improve their conditions.

Cuts in housing and other benefits have combined to push many working class people further into poverty and debt in recent years. From economic neccesity, some homeworkers continue to sign on the dole (or continue in part time work outside the home) without declaring their meagre earning from homeworking. This overlapping into the 'informal' or 'black' economy makes some homeworkers understandably reluctant to draw attention to themselves. Most, if not all, homework bosses realise that some of their workers are 'doing in on the side', and are happy to exploit that situation. Some have threatened to grass up troublesome employees to the DSS.

'Trade unionism' has played a significant role in isolating homeworkers from other workers and re-inforcing divisions in the class. Trade union bureaucrats have not only ignored the plight of homeworkers, but have often denounced them as a threat to 'real workers'. They've argued that the appalling conditions and wages that homeworkers 'allow bosses to get away with' are used as a lever to undermine 'their members' pay and conditions.

Hostility

While it's undoubtedly true that bosses will try to play workers off against each other in such a way, it is the sectional and divisive nature of trade unionsim that allows them to get away with it - in this case actively encouraging hostility to replace class solidarity. A struggle that sought to unite homeworkers, with low-paid factory workers, with casual and part-time labour around common class interests could immediately expose the unions' role.

Despite the difficulties, groups of homeworkers have already begun to get organised. In Leicester, an Outworkers Campaign Group has already begun to break the isolation of many local homeworkers, bringing groups together to share experiences and pool knowledge. Simply meeting other homeworkers has been an important step forward for many.

But there are problems. From the start, the Campaign has responded to demands - from homeworkers - to operate as a kind of 'local agency' for women looking to take up homeworking. They keep records of 'good' and 'bad' employers and put women in contact with firms who have vacancies. While this may help keep workers away from the worst employers, it inevitably draws the Campaign into a management role.

But more importantly, the Leicester Outwork Campaing was not the initiative of any of the 10,000-plus local homeworkers, but was established and funded by the local council. They paid for two university graduates to staff and run the project 'on behalf of' those workers. The use of 'professional helpers' and publicity material

which 'welcomes the involvement and interest' of local homeworkers, clearly shows that the organisation is apart from, and not a part of the workforce.

In getting organised, the first struggle that homeworkers need to wage, is the struggle to find information: about the company they work for, about other firms working locally, and about the hundreds of other homeworkers living in the same town.

Contacting other homeworkers may mean leafletting local estates and shopping centres, or advertising in the jobs column in local papers. The first step in shattering their isolation may simply be to bring their work to each others houses, enabling them to share child care, and giving them time to talk and plan. If this is successful, it could be moved to a local community centre or hall - enabling many more workers to get involved, and giving scope for estate-wide organisation to take off.

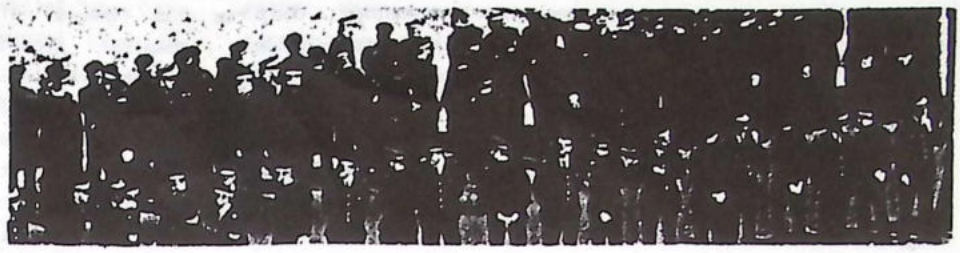
Struggles

Because homeworking is based outside of the factories and in people's homes - it destroys the artificial divisions that are erected between struggles in the 'workplace' and struggles in the 'community'. There is the immediate potential for homeworkers to generalise their specific economic struggles into wider fights for community resources, for better local health care, against 'yuppification', drawing support and forging unity across the class.

But these are early days. The explosion in homeworking has not yet been matched by a growth in workers' organisation, but there are signs of a growing confidence.

Because homeworkers are such 'low-status' workers, and because they are 'difficult' to organise in traditional workplace models, it seems likely that trade unions will continue to ignore them.

This must be seen as an opportunity, not a set back. Homeworkers' self-activity can challenge the limitations of trade unionism and council paternalism, and go direct to make demands on other sections of the class for solidarity.•



CAPITALISM:
The biggest crime of all

CRIME IS A major issue for working class people, but how to deal with it ourselves has always proved a difficult problem for revolutionaries.

One of the main arguments we face is the ruling class would have us believe that acts of theft or violence are a social problem which affects us all equally, and that their solutions to it benefit all society.

To counter this, we must analyse crime using class based politics, because today's crime is defined by the ruling class (and the working class is blamed for most of it). Of course, some actions defined as crimes today will still be considered crimes in an anarchist society, but some will not be crimes at all.

Moralising

We must also be careful to avoid moralising, since as anarchists we believe neither in respect for property when we advocate industrial sabotage, nor in the sanctity of life, since we see killing of some members of the ruling class and their supporters an inevitable part of class struggle and revolution. Neither will we shed any tears if a wealthy so and so has his/her house turned over, or gets pushed about in the street, never mind suggest it is something to be punished for.

Even if we accept that some crime and anti-social behaviour is due to poverty and alienation under capitalism, it is not enough to suggest it will just disappear after the revolution once we have common ownership and stress-free lives.

We need to come up with some answers now, otherwise we will never be able to argue for the complete destruction of the police and 'justice' system. Taking control of production in the factories must also mean taking control of the streets, creating our own code of conduct, and having procedures for dealing with crime - we need to help create the confidence so that working class people can do this as part of a general solidarity and a feeling of strength in the community.

As a solution to crime, the ruling class give us the police and Neighbourhood Watch on one hand, probation and prison on the other. The rich can also afford to hire private security firms to protect their homes and property.

Most people would say they hate the police, but in the final reckoning see them as necessary because there is no alternative. We must go beyond the case of someone hating the police because they were caught speeding, or were searched in the street at 11pm, because they may still believe in a police force and prisons as a solution to 'real' crime, if only for serious crimes like rape or murder.

We must also be careful not to argue against a police force just because they are racist and sexist, which is often used as a reason for getting rid of the cops. Presumably we would still be against a 'right-on' police force that beat up working class people with equal vigour, regardless of sex or race.

Disorder

We know the police exist to keep us in line. From the horse's mouth, even a Chief Police Officer admits that policing is geared more and more to preventing public disorder, whether in riots or in industrial struggles (violent picketing).

But try saying that to the person who reads the high coverage of crime in

the daily papers, or the pensioner who is too scared to leave the house after watching Crimewatch or Police 5 on TV.

Neighbourhood Watch has caught on in working class areas and it is precisely that foothold in the community the police are looking for. However, Neighbourhood Watch is more about individuals protecting themselves in the home with alarms and window locks, and not walking out late at night, than creating a collective community effort against crime. This is not surprising really, because a community working together against crime might also have the strength to fight physical and political attacks by the state. Imagine a Broadwater Farm type effort against poll-tax collection!

Keeping an eye on our own is necessary and some form of community patrol is a good idea, if it is totally answerable to the people it is attempting to defend, and is working without and against the police.

To some, the idea of working class people running their own community crime prevention conjures up images of vigilante squads roaming around kneecapping wrongdoers, but who says our methods should be crude? Are the police and courts more just? We are the ones closest to the people who commit anti-social acts in our community, not the police, and we can find the fairest and best way to deal with them.

Community

Some forms of 'community justice' already exist. We can take examples from the many Asian youth organisations who have come together to crush violence committed by racists and fascists. The justice is dealt quickly and efficiently to individuals without the macho gang warfare often envisaged by left-wing anti-fascists.

One problem faced by the Asian youth squads was that some members of their community felt intimidated by their actions - a problem which will hopefully be solved by making sure everyone knows who they are. Another was attracting trouble by their presence. In spite of these problems this shows the effectiveness of crime prevention by a group linked to the community.

The Guardian Angels were in the news recently as they came over from New York to clean up the London Underground and get the 'scum off the streets'. This group of uniformed vigilantes were cautiously welcomed by Douglas Hurd and the police as a solution to crime in working class areas. In reality, in the US they have done more to protect Yuppies on the subways and look after property developments by clearing out the homeless and anyone with a 'strange' haircut.

The Guardian Angels are typical of a group of self-appointed police substitutes who are answerable to no-one. This is completely against the idea of community control.

In summary, the answer to crime is the same as our solution for running society - organisation by the working class, for the working class.●

Guardian Angels: self-appointed, answerable to no-one.

In defence of structure

THE ORGANISATIONAL PLATFORM OF THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISTS: Workers Solidarity Movement, £1.50.

RE-PUBLISHED RECENTLY BY the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM), this pamphlet was first produced in 1926 in Paris by the "Dielo Trouda" group, of which the exiled Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno was a founding member.

Two excellent introductions give brief historical and political context to the text, and point towards the determining factor of its content : the failure of the anarchist movement - particularly in Russia during the revolution - to provide a theoretically coherent and organisationally effective alternative to the authoritarian and reformist Marxist elements within the working class.

It was clearly the intention of the "Dielo Trouda" group to tackle this problem with the publication of this pamphlet.

Contrasts

The first section, entitled "General Section" deals with ideas of the class struggle, the hegemony of the state and its relationship with capitalism, and exposes the ideology and methods of Marxist-Leninism with classical anarchist-communist arguments.

A particularly telling contrast is drawn between the Leninist concept of the masses as being "unable to go beyond a trade-union consciousness", and the anarchist belief "that the labouring masses have inherent creative and constructive possibilities".

The next section, entitled "Constructive Section", builds on the ideas presented previously, and attempts to outline some strategies for for the organisation of production and consumption during and after the revolution, and the defence of the revolution by a standing "people's army".

These ideas are brief to the point of superficiality, but they do attempt to face some of the questions that anarchist have found most difficult to answer when contrasted with authoritarian solutions.

Organisation

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the last section of the pamphlet deals with the organisational methods that the "Dielo Trouda" group felt it would be necessary to adopt to acheive anarchist-communism.

Their conclusions have been accused of being "only one step away from Bolshevism", and it is not difficult to see how such charges could be made.

The pamphlet advocates a highly organised vanguardist "General Union of Anarchists" (GUA), that would operate on the basis of a clearly defined political line, federative structure and collective responsibilty. What is not made clear, is how this line is to be developed, and precisely what relationship the GUA would have with the working-class in a revolutionary situation.

It is all too easy to see this vanguardist approach leading to a revolutionary elite acting upon an inflexible ideology, rather than creating and encouraging the development of anarchist-communist politics through the self-activity of the working class.

Nevertheless, no-one would claim that this is a closed issue, and as a point of departure for anarchist-communist organisations, the pamphlet provides a clear argument for the need for co-ordinated political organisation.●

Tintin strikes

BREAKING FREE (The Adventures of Tintin), J. Daniels; Attack International, £2.00.

FROM THOSE WHO brought us Scum - Tintin's adventures at Wapping - we now have Breaking Free, a comic book fantasy which has Tintin "back with his pals, battling it out against the State and bringing the old world to it's knees, in a classic full-length story of love, struggle and revolution."

The plot is totally implausible. Tintin has been kicked off the JTS scheme, caught shoplifting and has had his dole cut - the only similarities between this Tintin and Herge's are the name and (brilliant!) haircut. He starts working with his uncle, The Captain, on a building site.

There's an accident on the site and one of the workers is killed. Immediately - and I mean immediately - the workers call a wildcat strike and demand more wages, fewer hours, better safety, the sacking of the site supervisor and compensation for the dead man's family. The union is instantly dismissed: "oh, it ain't our union, it's just for the bosses...", and the strike spreads to all the company's sites, other work places, communities and quickly develops into a revolutionary situation as working class people begin to recognise their common needs and interests.

Racism, sexism and homophobia are dealt with in a very brief and simplified way - once people are told it's wrong, they don't do it again. Similarily, although all sections of the working class are involved in the activity, there is no attempt at political insight beyond a popularist and spontanaeist approach.

But this is a work of fantasy as opposed to serious political propaganda, and as such should be read for fun.●

Unconditional support

THE FIRST ISSUE of Organise! is an improvement on Virus in the quality of layout and presentation, and there is definitely an improvement in content: more up-to-date issues and debate.

One article in particular - "From imperialist war to class war", was both informative and topical.

But there was on section which worried me.

I agree that the task of libertarian revolutionaries in Britain is to oppose imperialism, to point to the bloddy repression of the anti-unionist struggle, and expose the propaganda war conducted through the British media. Of course, we must call for 'Troops Out' and promote working class unity.

But are we to oppose, quote: "the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of international socialism"?

Taken to its logical conclusion this statement means that British libertarian communists should side with the British State in opposing the unification of Ireland as a bourgeois, capitalist state, because the Irish working class (North and South) must fight for unification only "in the context of international socialism".

When, as British revolutionaries, we call for 'Troops Out', we cannot add in brackets, as a pre-condition of our own, "But only in the context of international socialism"!

The fight for international socialism must be built on international working class solidarity. This solidarity is not just miraculously present in workers' minds, it has to be built.

To build it in Britain, amongst British workers, we must support, unconditionally, the Irish people's right to self-determination. In practice this means challenging the imperialism of the British State, calling for 'Troops Out', and a united independent Ireland (only to be united with Britain "in the context of international socialism").

To build international working class solidarity in Ireland, amongst the Irish working class, is to fight, as the author of the article correctly points out, for "a revolutionary secular socialist movement" which is as opposed to Ireland's indigenous bourgeoisie as it it to British imperialism.

In practice this means challenging the nationalism of the Republican Movement, and to counter-pose to this the fight for anti-imperialist working class unity, arguing for international socialism.

So, libertarian communists in Britain and Ireland have the same goal. But, because we are approaching it from different sides (from the oppressing state and the oppressed nation), our methods of fighting differ. This has often been called the 'dual role' of revolutionaries.

To argue, on any basis, that libertarian communists should "oppose the unification of Ireland" AT ALL, is to side with British imperialism by default. The struggle for self-determination of a people is in itself progressive, as it challenges the logic of imperialism which is the logic of capitalism.

Even if we recognise that the unification of Ireland as a bourgeois nation state will not bring liberation for the Irish working class, we must see the struggle for self-determination as part of the international fight against imperialism. This fight may not be consciously socialist but it is always objectively anti-capitalist and as such must be supported.

To believe that the anti-imperialist struggle can ever be a 'pure' fight for international socialism is hopelessly utopian. It will always involve many and diverse sections of the oppressed, whose aims may well be contradictory. Libertarian communists must recognise this and fight for working class dominance of the struggle and argue consistently for international socialism.

Yours for a strong,
Libertarian Communist movement and International Socialism
Starik

Republican marching band on Troops Out march.

AUTHOR'S REPLY: DESPITE our disagreements, Comrade Starik raises some interesting and important points I would like to reply to.

When I said that libertarian communists should oppose the unification of Ireland on any basis other than in the context of International Socialism, I meant to emphasise that we should not look to British solutions.

Imperialism can never play a progressive role and any move by the British state towards unification would have their desire to maintain economic imperialist domination at heart. A united capitalist Ireland would be acceptable to all but the most Neanderthal elements in the British ruling class, if it was to remain in the western imperialist orbit and was able to maintain reasonable political stability.

We disagree with Comrade Starik when he talks of 'unconditional support for the Irish People's right to self-determination'.

Who are these 'Irish People'?: Irish workers? Irish petit bourgeois? Irish bosses? And do they all have the same interests? Where is the class analysis in this catch all phrase the 'Irish People'?

When Comrade Starik talks of an independent Ireland, he fails to come to terms with the fact that in an international capitalist (and therefore imperialist) system, political and economic independence is a fallacy.

All nations which have gone through 'national liberation' have been forced to ally with one of the imperialist blocs. 'Unconditional support' also has a Leninist ring about it. Unconditional support for the dominant anti-imperialist group in Ireland, would mean excuse-making for elitist paramilitary actions, some of which verge on out-right racist murder (like the targetting of individual Protestant workers - a strategy the IRA has followed in the recent past). This is best left to the Stalinists and Trotskyites.

Starik is right to say that a revolutionary secular socialist movement must be built to challenge the Left nationalism of the Republicans and that the struggle to smash the Orange State and kick the British troops out, must be dominated by the working class and its interests. This is one of the tasks of revolutionary minorities in both Britain and Ireland. Let's go to it.●

Anarchy or Oligarchy?

I AM WRITING in respect to the articles on 'rotation' that have appeared in previous issues of your magazine, and to ask about the ACF's emphasis on organisation.

I would be interested to know your opinions (if any) on Robert Michel's 'Political Parties' - one time Marxist and syndicalist, later elitist and fascist.

I would like to know whether you think his work is of any relevence - especially to Anarchists (as his book does contain a section on Anarchism and says elsewhere that although organisation is essential it is gained at the expense of a conservative/reactionary elite. (See especially Chapter 4 B, 'Psychological Cause of Leadership': "One who holds the office of delegate requires a moral right to that office... One who has for a certain time held the office of delegate ends by regarding that office as his own property". And also Chapter 6, 'The Political Gratitude of the Masses'.

He says Anarchists "are the declared enemies of all organisation, and who, when they form organisations, do so in defiance of their own principles..." (p82).

He talks of Anarchist 'leaders' such as Kropotkin and Bakunin as having "some of the qualities and pretensions characteristic of all leadership" (p358), ie superior intellect compared to the masses who look up to them as superiors.

This brings me to Michel's argument that the working class will never be 'educated' enough to prevent leadership/ bureaucracy stepping above them and ruling their lives.

So "who says organisation, says oligarchy" (p401). Do you think this is relevent, and if so if Anarchism is possible, or to what degree it is possible?

Yours sincerely
RSW
Manchester

ORGANISE! EDITORS' REPLY: In the first instance it is necessary to make it absolutely clear that anarchist-communists do not advocate organisation "in defiance of their principles"; in this respect Michel makes the classic mistake of confusing absence of government with a lack or order and organisation in society.

"Anarchy", literally translated from the Greek means, "without government", and it is the organisation of society on a non-hierarchical basis that anarchist-communists seek, not the creation on an unstructured and disorganised society. The article on rotation was an example of one possible form of organisation that might prove useful in an anarchist-communist society.

On the question of delegation it is not made obvious from your letter on what basis a delegate "requires a moral right to that office". Anarchist-communists see delegation (or mandation) in the context of rotation as a useful mechanism in decision making, and would seek to involve everyone affected by the decisions taken in that process. This would include rotation of delegates on a regular basis; certainly there is no moral perogative attached to this function, and because the delegate is involved in a conscious effort to avoid hierarchical social structures, it is unlikely "(the) delegate ends by regarding that office as his own property".

In examining this issues of leadership and the political consciousness of the working class, Michel conveniently chooses to depict 'hierarchy' as an inevitable feature of human nature and of society. Michel ignores the social conditions that, under capitalism, distort this supposedly 'inherent' and 'unchangeable' nature.

Anthropology furnishes us with examples of societies where no hierarchy existed, and where human social activity has been expressed through co-operative and communal forms. Even within our own unequal and hierarchical society, and despite every attempt by the ruling class to destroy it, co-operation plays an important and fulfilling role in the every-day lives of working class people, both through work, struggle and community action. This shows us that it is meaningless to insist on hierarchy as being the only "natural" and inevitable form of social organisation.

If we take the goal of society to be the promotion of well-being, freedom and equality for all, it is clear that this cannot come from the destructive competition and "enterprise" of capitalism.

Anarchist-communists, by participating in active and conscious working class struggle, seek to bring about a classless society based on communal and co-operative forms to acheive this goal.

From the above, not only is it clear that this is a possibility, but once established, exploitation and oppression will become far more meaningless in the human context than co-operation and community may appear today.

Back issues of Organise! - and its forerunner Virus - are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

Whoops!

THE EDITORS SEEM to have given the article I translated and adapted on the Italian Base Committees ('Self-organisation Italian style' - Organise! 15) a bit of a mauling.

The article did not first appear in the Italian anarchist paper La Lutta! As far as I know, there is no such paper.

It appeared in the French libertarian communist magazine Lutter!.

Similarly, my mention of a group of activists on the railways - the Union of Anarchist and Libertarian Railway Workers - which I explained was not a trade union, but a union in the sense of a coming together - a workers' group - was totally dismembered.

I hope this letter sets the record straight.

Yours
NH
London ACF

'Revolutionary Unionism'?

IN A RECENT issue of your otherwise excellent magazine, a large article by a member of the Communication Workers Group appeared ('What is the potential of rank and file action?' - Organise! 14).

The article is infuriating reading for the anarcho-syndicalist. The article espouses a view of the reformist trades unions that I'm sure most anarcho-syndicalists would agree with.

However, by stating that 'issues' like 'pay and conditions' are so corrupting for workers' organisations, and to claim that by its "fundamental nature" unionism is doomed to sell-out and abandon any revolutionary intent it may have held, the article is saying that there is no difference between existing unions and the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union. What an insult!

It dismisses the various rank-and-file movements that have existed in Britain with the desultory claim that "all rank-and-file movements in Britain have been alternative union movements".

It then says that the simple day-to-day activities of the union will take over and turn the Anarcho-Syndicalist Union into a "fairer negotiator for a fairer form of exploitation... This is the sole purpose of a union, and it has no time or inclination to overthrow the state, as it has a mass membership to look after and an economy to keep an eye on..."

I can see how these arguments apply to the reformist, bourgeois unions - but I cannot for the life of me see how these effect Anarcho-Syndicalist Unions. Surely such an organisation is a revolutionary, working class organisation? What else could it be?

Taken as a whole, the article smacks of a dangerous slide into ultra-leftism - one of the few creeds that actually defuses revolutionary fervour.

The working classes exist because of economic factors - all of us, proletariat, lumpen-proletariat and peasantry are forced to rely on an economic relationship with capitalism. This means we have to work in

LETTERS

order to survive. This entails a reliance on 'bread and butter' issues such as pay and conditions.

As usual, the tired old argument about anarcho-syndicalism being 'divisive' is dragged out. What rot! Tell me, where does the line exist between working class communities and the workplace? Who the hell do you mix with after work?

The article argues that "something else is needed - something revolutionary and all-embracing socially".

My view is that it would be impossible to have a single revolutionary body. You need an Anarcho-Syndicalist Union (which is a damn sight more "socially embracing" than a gang of mardy Lefties hunched over their coffee in the canteen) as well as your specific anarchist group, women's group, Jewish, Black, Irish, etc.

Anarcho-syndicalism is a socially embracing ideology - which seeks to organise in all section of the working class and their communities. It is very ironic to hear anarchist-communists tell us to 'come out of the factories' when its a line we invented to confront the Revolutionary Syndicalists.

Most of the criticisms of anarcho-syndicalism are really criticisms of revolutionary syndicalism.

"It's always nice to end on a quote". Here's a very interesting one from Rudolf Rocker's The London Years:

"The old slogan, 'the worse, the better', was based on an erroneous assumption. Like the other slogan 'all or nothing', which made many radicals oppose any improvement in the lots of the workers even when the workers demanded it, on the grounds that it would distract the mind of the proletariat, and turn it away from the road so social emancipation.

It is contrary to all the experience of history and psychology: people who are not prepared to fight for the betterment of the living conditions are not likely to fight for social emancipation. Slogans like this are a cancer in the revolutionary movement." (*)

PH, Nottingham Direct Action Movement (DAM)

AUTHOR'S REPLY: Instead of just saying "what an insult!", why don't you try to explain why my analysis of the fundamental nature of unionism doesn't also apply to the anarcho-syndicalist union?

I do not "dismiss" rank-and-file movements, I wrote an article examining them! It is true, however, that we need to go beyond them.

It is not "desultory" to say "all rank-and-file movements in Britain have been alternative union movements" - it is a fact. If you think an alternative union movement to the existing one is of little importance then why do you want an anarcho-syndicalist union?

You don't say why an anarcho-syndicalist union "is a revolutionary working class organisation". You just say, "What else could it be?". Come on! The article demands a more reasoned response than that!

Why is the article "ultra-leftist"?

You end with more assertions of anarcho-syndicalism's revolutionary character. However, they are not backed up, and therefore, in the light of the arguments in the article, serve as no defence for anarcho-syndicalism.

Regards the quote: did I say I opposed "any improvement in the lot of the workers, even when the workers demanded it"? No, I said the opposite of course. Please read the article again...

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

Those for the next issue should be sent to the address on page 2 by September 29th.

Please keep letters to around 250 words - otherwise we may need to edit them.

All letters must carry a name and address, if the author wants it published. (We don't - unless specifically asked - print your address in Organise!, but may need to contact you ourselves). Letters without a name and address won't be considered.

We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it and apologise if this occurs. Edited letters are marked at the end with a (*).

POLL TAX:

(Continued from page 4)

of goods from those who refused to pay their non-registration fines. At least one set of bailiffs needed a police escort to get them off the estate in one piece.

Not surprisingly, labour movement leaders are worried by all this activity. The rally at the 30,000 strong TUC poll tax march in Manchester in July was used as a platform to denounce non-payment and condemn industrial action. To a barrage of booing and catcalls the opening speaker was first of many to fiercely attack any suggestions that the law should be broken, and proclaimed the 'utter failure' of the non-payment campaign in Scotland.

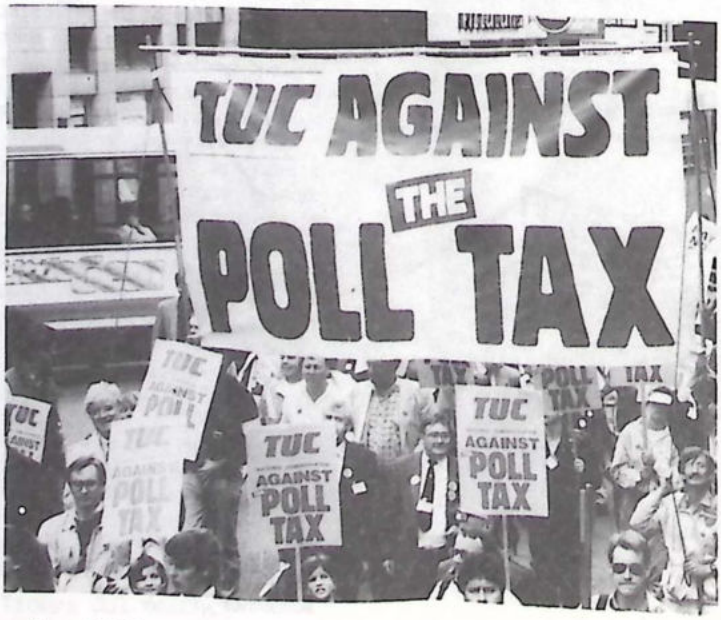
The decision by the TUC to launch such a public and aggressive attack on effective action (rather than simply ignoring it through calls for a 'united campaign' and a future 'vote for Labour') reflects the growing concern in the labour and union bureaucracies that they are failing to head off the real fight against the poll tax.

The abject failure of the 'Stop It' campaign to derail the fight in Scotland, has been made worse by the inability of Labour Councils to disguise their enthusiastic compliance with the tax.

Labour

The TUC's hopes that resistance could be focused in a solely anti-Tory direction, have been wrecked as Labour councils have been seen to compile registers, fine resisters, dispatch bailiffs and issue huge poll tax demands - while simultaneously denouncing this 'iniquitous Tory tax'.

Labour controlled Central Region went as far as to freeze the bank accounts of over 130 non-registers. They deducted a £50 fine, and an additional £16.01 "sheriff's fee". Panicked by the outraged reaction that followed, the council immediately restated its 'total opposition to the Tory poll tax', and pledged that for every £1 it seized in similar moves in the future, it would donate £1 to local charities 'working with the underpriviliged'. It also announced it was to establish a Debt Counselling Service to offer tea and sympathy to those that it is driving deeper into poverty.



It's hardly surprising that growing numbers of working class people in Scotland - including many life-long Labour voters - are increasingly seeing their 'socialist' local authorities as part of the enemy.

Council rent arrears are at an all-time high in Scotland - the recent cutbacks in housing and other benefits have left many families simply unable to meet all their bills. At the core of the 'won't pay' campaign is a huge number of people who simply cannot pay.

While the non-payment campaign is strengthened and extended, attention must be turned to winning solidarity action from council workers administering the tax.

The recent wave of strike action by local government workers was used by many local poll tax groups as an opportunity to visit picket lines - both to offer support to low-paid council workers, and to argue directly with them the need to disrupt and sabotage poll tax collection from within.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To acheive our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in the face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and economic and political colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist communist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

5. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to acheive anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

6. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions, however, are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to acheive a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we many acheive today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never acheive this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a point of common departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

7. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creation of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

8. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.●

AT OUR NATIONAL conference in April this year, we further amended our 'aims and principles', making two additional changes:

* Point 4 has been split into two seperate sections, one on war and the environment; one on revolution.

* What is now Point 6 - the section on the unions - has been revised, reordered and slightly expanded.

ACF pamphlets are available from: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

ACE No 1 Basic Bakunin: The ideas of Bakunin, one of the founders of class struggle anarchism. (50p inc p&p).

ACE No 2 The Poll Tax and How to Fight It: Soon to be reprinted and updated, this pamphlet describes the effects of the Poll Tax, and the inevitable failure of the Labour Party and the Unions in fighting, and shows how to build effective strategies for collective action that can scupper the Tory flagship. (50p inc p&p).

ACE No 3 The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: a translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p inc p&p).

Also Anarchism as we see it: the original pamphlet outlining the theory, politics and direction of the ACF (50p inc p&p).

Also Russia 1917 - A Libertarian Communist Supplement: describes what happened in the soviets and factory committees (10p & sae).

Readers in London

An open discussion meeting for those interested in finding out more about the politics and activities of the Anarchist Communist Federation, is held on the first Thursday of every month at 8.30pm at the Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (Nearest tube - Russell Square). More details from London ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

CHINA: in whose hands?

THE BRUTALITY OF the Chinese State in crushing the student uprising earlier this summer shocked the world. The bravery of the resistance to such an autocratic regime was an inspiration to us all. But what must be understood is that the callousness shown by the Peking authorities was only it's mask slipping, it's hand being forced.

Any state must be prepared to use the ultimate threat of violence against it's people to maintain power. China is no different, it is the state showing it's true face.

Under obvious dictatorships this true nature of the state is easier to see. In the so-called 'democratic' West it is simply the case that it rarely plays it's full hand.

After the destruction of the hard line Maoist leadership in China, the new regime tried a more pragmatic approach. A centrally planned economy operated during a period of complete restructuring. But once the structuring of industry and the establishing of roads. power networks, ports etc. had taken place, the economy moved onto another stage.

The 'Iron Rice Bowl', the policy of a job, food and shelter for life, was broken. The politicians needed a new direction for the economy.

The Deng Xiaoping leadership then tried to use the political and social methods of the centralised economy to create a mixed economy without social change in any real sense. He used the liberal wing of the leadership, Zhao Ziyang etc, for this, with the hope of democratic reforms. Li Peng and the 'loyal' army dashed these hopes. The economic reforms were a failure, corruption widespread, and the scene set for the kind of unrest we saw in May/June.

The student movement began by establishing that it wanted reforms within the Chinese system, not to overthrow it. They appealed to Zhao Ziyang and other liberals within the Party for change, and appeared to simply favour a more open society and a freer economy (a kind of Glasnost and Perestroika).

Gorbachov's visit to Peking provided an ideal focus for action, and the hunger strike and occupation of Tianamen Square began as an attempt to embarass the Government into giving way while the eyes of the world were on it.

Student leaders demanded to meet government officials, still believing that the will of the people could in itself force change. They were adamant about their non-violence, as a moral principle as well as a tactic, as though this would somehow shame the State into giving in.

Reports from those present in Tianamen Square on June 4th, as the tanks rolled over thousands of sleeping protesters, say the dead were people who still believed that the approaching army would, at worst, move in to carry them out of the area and then withdraw.

As many students prepared themselves for a night of fighting, others went to sleep as normal to prepare for a moral victory the next day. We salute them for their bravery in taking on the State, but we must learn from their deaths never to underestimate the brutality of Government and the forces that serve it.

The student movement was by no means 'liberal' however. The adoption of the 'Goddess of Liberty' must not be seen as an embracing of an American ideal. The symbol is originally one of the French Revolution, and whilst some concentrate on the reforms the students wanted, the demand was essentially for a form of socialism rather than capitalism.

We can criticise them for being naive about the real nature of state socialism, but we can't accuse them of aspiring to bourgoise, western-style democracy.

For the students and workers to call themselves a 'Democracy Movement' must also be understood in context. There have been strong libertarian socialist movements in the area, but to call yourself a 'communist' in a state communist country is to appear to be pro-government. People emphasising ideas of freedom, equality and choice in such a climate could have much in common with anti-state communists such as ourselves.

After being forced underground, the student movement has learnt many lessons. Not least, they have seen that the armed forces, whether labelled the 'People's Army' or not, is on the side of the powerful, and, as an organisation, serves the State's interests.

Individual soldiers in a conscripted army can be won back to the class from which they came, as the people's movement discovered. This obviously increases the chances of success for an uprising. But the students underestimated the loyalty of many troops to the state, with which their selfish interests lay, and as such had no tactic for dealing with the attacks that followed.

Without indulging in moral outrage, we must pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of those that fought and died in Tianamen Square. The movement must develop a clear analysis of what happened. Already students are saying that they should act as more of a part of a workers and peoples' movement as a whole.

The left is inconsistent in it's response. The Stalinists must surely be shamefaced, and all Leninists know that to ensure the success of a state-communist "revolution", the authorities must be prepared to crush "counter-revlutionary" movements.

It happens that such movements are often of the same people who worked for revolution, and are now questioning the right of their government to exploit, lie and dictate to them.●

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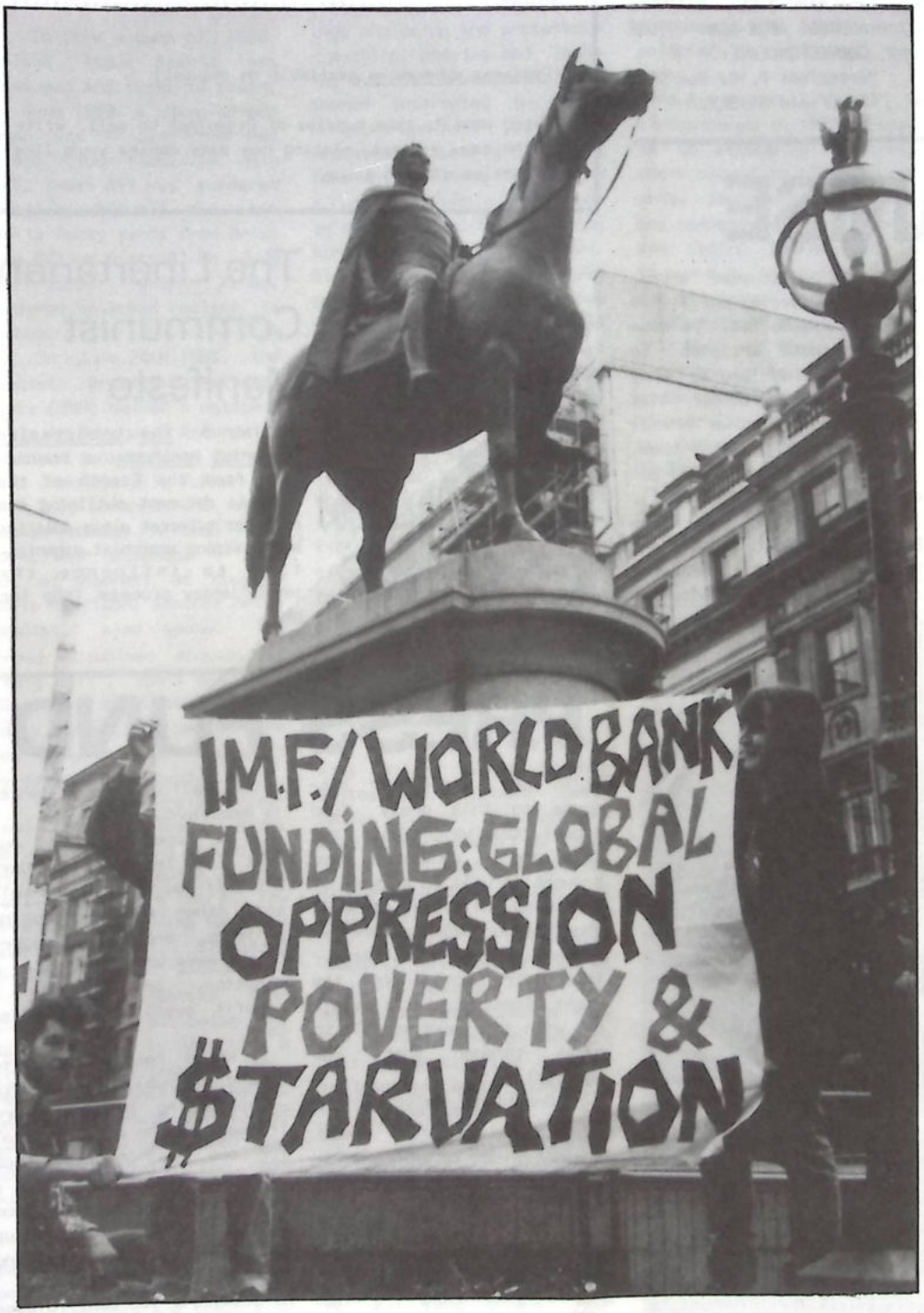
ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

30p
Nov-Jan
1989/90
Issue 17



ANARCHY IN THE EASTERN BLOC

IRELAND: SECURITY LEAKS

MILITANT AND THE POLL TAX

CAMBODIA: WHAT FUTURE?

POLAND

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the folllowing areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Bradford, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, Liverpool, London, Middlesex, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, Wokingham and York.

We have internal groupings around the following industries and interests:

Health, Education, Unemployed, Postal, Students, Local Government, Community Youth Work and Women.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

WE HAVE A NEW NATIONAL ADDRESS FOR ALL FUTURE CORRESPONDENCE:
Write to: P. O. Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise! - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree withour A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the February 1990 issue are December 15th for features and reviews, and December 29th for letters and the news section.

All contributions to the next issue of Organise! should be sent to: ACF, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

Want to know more?

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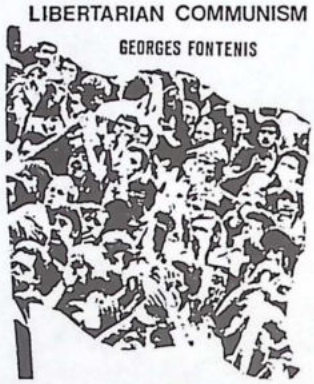

The Libertarian Communist Manifesto

ACE No 3 The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: a translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process. (60p inc p&p).

PRESS FUND

WE'VE HAD A far better response to this press fund appeal than we got with our last one - donations have brought in well in excess of 150. And while that is well short of our 250 quarterly-target, it shows - at least - that we're moving in the right direction. Let's go all out with this next appeal, to break through that 250 barrier!

Donations we've had in include: Dagenham, 50; London, 50; Rugby, 25; Bradford, 6.84; Birmingham 3.20 and Hastings, 2.

Our thanks go to all those comrades, friends, subscribers and readers who've given money - which will go a long way towards meeting our printing, production and postage costs.

Since we launched the press fund in Feb 1989 we've raised well over 500 - which is excellent.

We hope to reach our next 250 target by January 20th. If you think Organise!, and other ACF publishing projects, are worth supporting please try to send in a donation, or organise a benefit event to help raise cash.

We're really keen to expand our publishing efforts - producing bigger, more frequent issues of Organise! for one - but to make such plans feasible, we need a regular, reliable income from our 'press fund' to top up the ACF's own fund raising efforts.

So, if you can, please rush donations to:
ACF Press Fund,
Box 1, Hiziki,
15 Goosegate, Hockley,
Nottingham NG1.

Cover photo: Carole Harwood

DEWSBURY: the rising tide of racism

IT SEEMS AT times that anti-racism has gone out of fashion. Racism certainly has not!

In the autumn of 1988, Maulana Abdur Rashid was kidnapped and burnt to death. In June 1989, a Bangladeshi woman was thrown from her second floor flat. In July 1989, Ismat Ali was murdered defending himself and his family forty yards from Brick Lane Police Station. On July 26 1989, Tahir Akram, murdered by armed racists in Oldham.

On June 24th 1989, the fascist British National Party (BNP) called a national rally in Dewsbury. Around 150 fascists and racists gathered. John Tyndall, fuhrer of the BNP, preached the usual racist message. A local Tory councillor attended - just out of interest of course. Eddie Morrison, another noted fascist, also spoke. The crowd combined shouts of 'seig heil', 'Pakis out' and 'God save the Queen'. Their rally ended, and most were led away to their transport by police, at around 3.00pm.

The counter-rally organised by Kirklees Black Workers' Group was around 800 strong. It was quite peaceful. There were very few arrests early in the day. The counter-rally disbanded around 1.30pm.

However, racists from the Black Bull pub began the day's violence by attacking a group of anti-fascists. The result being that the police penned the growing number of protesters in and around the Sport Centre and the DSS building.

Far from protecting people from racists, the police were content to allow Asian shoppers and traders to be robbed and attacked. The message from police - you should have stayed at home.

Rather than take on the racists, the 750 police decided to attack the anti-racists who had been trying to disperse. About 50 officers went over the railings enclosing the protestors - pushing, shoving and lashing out with truncheons. They seemed interested in mass arrests. One Asian youth was repeatedly punched in the face whilst handcuffed and in a headlock. People retreated as best they could, up narrow streets towards Savile Town. Riot squads were employed spreading terror throughout the area, people of all ages running in fear from mounted police.

On the day, 59 anti-racists, black and white, were arrested. That has now risen to 82 following police raids. This includes people from Dewsbury, Leeds, Sheffield and Botley. Bail conditions have been imposed on some very like South African 'banning orders'. The police are using this as an excuse, afraid of anti-racism, afraid of solidarity, their object is to destroy them.

There is only one necessity now for us - a strong, united and militant anti-racist movement. The charges against the Dewsbury 82 must be dropped and the police exposed in their racism and brutality.

'Chamches' (community leaders) are as afraid of such a movement as the police. As reactionaries they are busily trying to sabotage this attempt. After all, a politicised black community would rob them of their power. They are uninterested in the rise of racist attacks in Savile Town. The local press seem only capable of branding defenders of the community as rioters. We can not fail now. If we do then we all face attack from judicial and public bigotry.

All of this should be placed against the backdrop of other events.

The Tories are pushing a new national ideology. Education is going to be even more peverse, nationalist and anti-human. The government's policies on refugees, migrants and immigrants - already severe - will be strengthened in 1992. Europe is to become a fortress, doors closed to all but rich white immigrants. The poor, the oppressed, the exploited are being locked out or thrown out. Terrorism, drugs, and all manner of crimes are laid at their door.

Each of these problems needs answering. It is up to us to provide that answer - a movement to defend the 82 and to opposed the racism of 1992's 'Fortress Europe'.

Information from: Sheffield Defence Campaign, P. O. Box 246, Sheffield S1 1GT. •

RUC conspiracy

RECENT WEEKS HAVE seen the 'exposing' of links between members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary, and loyalist paramilitaries by the emergence of leaked documents containing files on nationalist individuals, including some IRA members.

The first expose came from the UFF (Ulster Freedom Fighters) confirmation through a BBC reporter, that they had used 'confidential' British security files in planning the murder of Laughlin Maginn, who was killed at home on August 24, and who had previously received and reported harassment and death threats from the RUC and UDR.

The following week it emerged that a British soldier convicted of possessing information intended for passing to loyalist death

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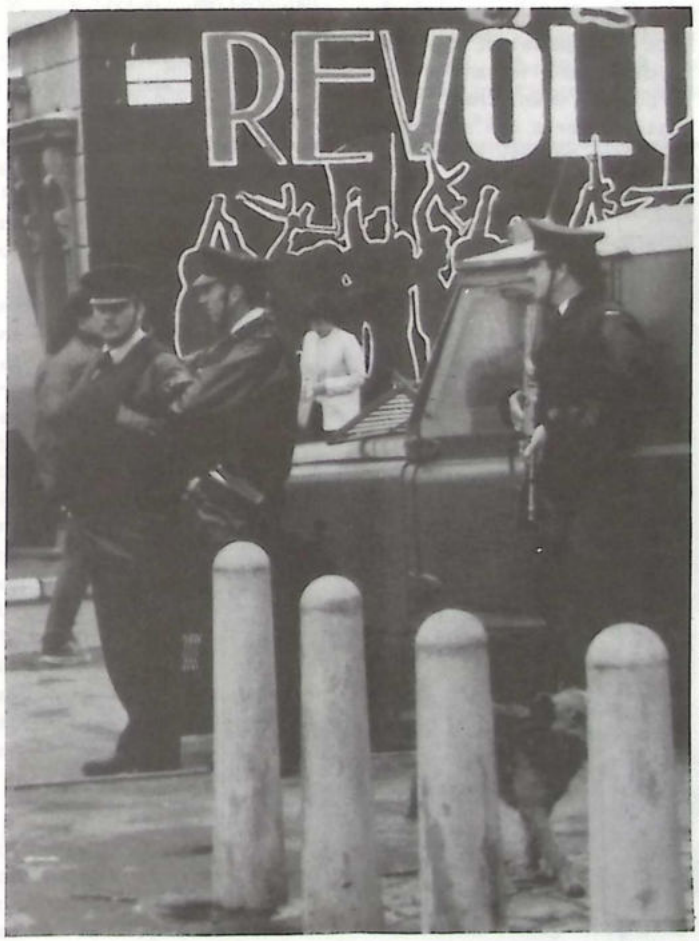


photo: R Galbraith and J Jackson

squads, had been reinstated into the army in England.

On September 10 the British army admitted that more files had "gone missing" from Ballykinlar base in County Down. The same day two UDR soldiers were charged with Maginn's murder.

We can see the hypocrisy of the Irish establishment in their 'grave concern' about the events. Sinn Fein too must see that military espionage is an inevitable tactic in a war time situation, one that is surely also employed in defending nationalist communities. Outrage and moral indignation are not appropriate here, when the links between the State and right wing groupings were already clear.

It is no surprise that such tactics are used when a state by it's very nature has an interest in putting down resistance to its imperialist presence. Revolutionaries would not 'criticize' a State for fulfilling what we know to be its function.

We oppose its continued existence as it is the root cause of the divisions in the working class such as exist in the six counties. We advocate the removal of the state by class conflict and are not surprised when the ruling class supports one section of the class against another to prevent its own role being exposed. In hiding the class nature of society, Sinn Fein and the IRA are obstacles to the defeat of the class system.

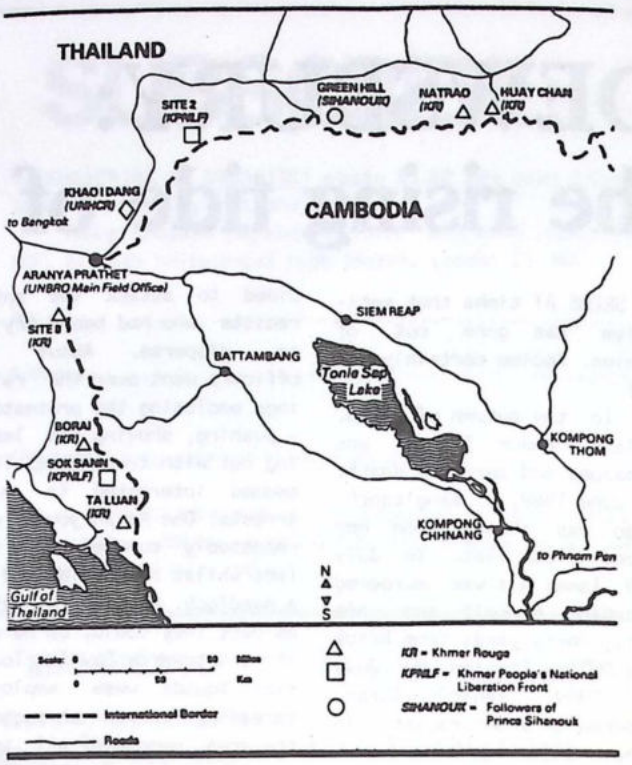
The reason for the leaks is not simply to prove how easily loyalists can pin point and harass nationalists. Reports have uncovered links between an extensive and influential "Inner Circle" in the RUC and the loyalist paramilitary group Ulster Resistance.

Ulster Resistance has the primary objective of undermining the Anglo-Irish Agreement by showing they have enough influence in the RUC to shape events in the Six Counties for themselves, if the British government stops doing it for them.

Ian Paisley led an illegal paramilitary show of strength just after the signing of the accord to make a very similar point.

To the British state the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a way of maintaining it's imperialist power on both sides of the border. Sinn Fein is of course only prepared to oppose the anti-republican nature of the Accord, rather than rejecting it as a ruling class initiative. To the loyalists it undermines the terror they can inflict on the nationalist community.

Thus it is not simply the case that the British State is pulling all the strings in the north of Ireland. If the situation is a struggle between aspiring future rulers on both sides, we must find revolutionary solutions rather than apologise for leadership politics. The ultimate enemy of the Irish working class is the ruling class, and we must not shy away from exposing that fact. ●



Cambodian civil war

TAKE SEVERAL INGREDIENTS: nationalism, political ambition, foreign intervention, Marxist-Leninism, and imperialism - and you have a recipe for disaster.

Since March 1970, when Prince Sihanouk was kicked out of power by Lon Nol, Cambodia has suffered from civil war, mass starvation and genocide.

Cambodia, before the decades of chaos, was a land overflowing with agricultural wealth. We should not overstate the quality of life at that time: Cambodia was, and is, an economically backward country. Nevertheless, it did manage to keep out of the wider Indo-China conflict until foreign intervention upset the apple-cart. US saturation bombing, early Vietnamese - and then Chinese - support for Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, and finally, Vietnamese invasion, have all played their part.

Pol Pot's aquisition of power, and the implementation of a dogmatic restructuring of the economy, had devastating results. The cities were emptied and all opposition was annihilated. Mass killing, starvation and forced labour, became part and parcel of the Marxist government's strategy.

Then, eleven years ago, a Russian financed and supplied Vietnamese army imposed their order.

A Vietnam-approved 'communist' regime was imposed under the head of Hun Sen. And now, the Vietnamese have had enough: they can no longer afford to keep thousands of their troops on Cambodian soil, as their own economy disintegrates.

The fear now is that civil war will once again intensify. The Khmer Rouge is estimated to be about 30,000 strong - not an overwhelming force, but nevertheless a threat. They draw their support from some sectors of the peasantry who were relatively unaffected by Pol Pot's period of power, and there is the prospect that their strength will grow.

There is the prospect, then, of two 'communist' armies - insurgent and governmental - facing each other in the battle fields.

Both the Khmer Rouge and the Government claim to be 'Marxists', yet their loyalties are not really tied to any particular class. Rather, it is power for themselves that each is struggling for. Marxist regimes, whatever stated motives, end up at the helm of new ruling classes that their 'revolutions' bring about.

As both the Soviet and Chinese models of economic and political reconstruction have proved to be unviable, the obviousness of this becomes increasingly apparent.

But, so long as external agents - such as China - back this or that 'Marxist' force in Cambodia, then there will be little prospect of anything but continued civil war. ●

'NEWS AND ANALYSIS' is continued on page 12, with a story about life for Cambodia's refugees in the camps in neighbouring Thialand.

Solidarity promise to crush resistance

"We must help Poland
in every way we can
to create the framework for a
genuine market economy."

THESE ARE THE words of Nigel Lawson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in response to the recent political changes and reforms in Poland. Poland is to be the Trojan Horse in the Eastern Bloc camp, whose conversion to "a genuine market economy" will sound the death knell for State 'Socialism' and usher in the final triumphant era of Capital.

This is Lawson's dream, and we can be sure that the IMF, World Bank and many Western governments will be doing their utmost to ensure that it succeeds.

Solidarity

In all of this, there is a salutory lesson to be learnt from the part played by Solidarity in helping to bring about these changes. After the events of the last few months, it could be easy to forget that the origins of Solidarity lie in the industrial unrest of 1980, when workers struck in defiance of the 'Communist' Dictatorship over issues of rising prices and low pay. General Jaruzelski duly crushed the strikes, instigated martial law and outlawed Solidarity.

But Jaruzelski knew that unless his government could solve these problems his dictatorship would face similar uprisings in the years to come.

By crushing workers resistance and instigating martial law, he hoped to solve Poland's problems at the expense of the working class. But by 1988 it was clear that even this harsh repression had failed. This year and last have seen the biggest waves of strikes and industrial unrest since 1980, and workers fought not just for improvement in wages and prices, but also for the legalisation of Solidarity.

Jaruzelski desperately needed to find a solution, and with the tactics of overt oppression unavailable to him, he chose instead to co-opt the Solidarity opposition to his regime by inviting them to participate in the 'solution'. Solidarity complied.

Talks

Their is no contradiction between Solidarity's role as a 'militant union' and its entering government. It's leadership has always had the political goal of 'social reform' as well as being the legal representative of the workforce. But whatever its aspirations, an organisation collaborating with the State can only negotiate the price of labour, never pose a serious threat to capitalism - east or west.

What followed was a series of round table talks between the 'Communist' dictatorship and the leaders of Solidarity, the results being a deal to allow Solidarity to field candidates in the June elections of this year. At the same time, it was already clear that the Solidarity leadership was becoming little more than a bureaucratised political elite with governmental aspirations, increasingly divorced from the working class that had been instrumental in its creation.

Solidarity's collusion with the 'Communist' regime goes much further, however, than simply helping to form a government with them, for they have also accepted many of the pre-conditions set by the 'Communists' in doing so, including allowing them to keep control of the ministries of defence and the interior, the two organs that helped outlaw them in the first place.

Profit

More importantly, they have wholeheartedly embraced the ethos of the market and the need to make Polands 'economy' profitable, undertaking the bulk of this task themselves. George Bush has expressed his desire that - under Solidarity's guide - Poland will become the "America of the Eastern Bloc".

After Lech Walesa had persuaded many workers to call off their strikes whilst the negotiations were in progress, he said of them "I am not going to toy with Poland. I extinguished the strikes and I will extinguish any others", and later "All types of strikes must be suspended", a clear indication that the Solidarity government's priorities lie primarily with regenerating the economy, and maintaining political stability, not with the well-being of the Polish people.

For the working class of Poland this will be an unmitigated disaster. It will mean that loss-making factories will have to be closed down, industries 'rationalised' to compete on the world market, and a whole package of similar 'austerity' measures will be introduced by Walesa and his cronies. The results are not difficult to predict: mass unemployment and extreme poverty - all imposed by the "people's union".

Foremost among the constitutional methods used to bring about these changes will be the banning of strikes of all kinds, and the control of all industrial unrest by Walesa's Solidarity representatives in the factories.

Tensions

It is difficult to predict how these tensions will resolve themselves in Poland, but for the moment, we can take it that the Solidarity government wholeheartedly endorses the chilling words of Theo Waigel, the West German Finance Minister, when he said of Poland: "It is not just about money. Human capital must be put to work by economic and financial experts as well". •

"All types of Strike must be suspended." - Lech Walesa.

IMF: stitching up the world economy

IN 1944, UNDER the aegis of political-economists Keynes and White, the Bretton Woods agreement was forged. Prior to the war, the western economy had swung between boom and depression. The agreement looked to solving the problem of capitalism once the war had been won.

Two organisations were formed - the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development).

The interests of the USA won out over those of the deficit countries (eg the UK). Henceforth the world economy was to be based upon that of its strongest economy - the USA's. Thus, the dollar was to become the currency to which all others were pegged. The IMF existed to eradicate protectionism, expand world trade, establish a fixed exchange rate, to police balance of payments problems. The World Bank was initially there to supervise the reconstruction of the major economies after the war.

Plague

It would be easy to portray the IMF and World Bank as evil, but is this really the case? Is it not true that they are simply what the major powers (the Group of 5, the Group of 10) make them? They are simply the messengers, the carriers of a plague born of the greedy needs of western capital.

Behind these agencies is a diseased world view. The fact that the major economies have huge voting strength there is only one part of the story. The agencies officials come mostly from where - need I ask?

Once the war-torn economies had been rebuilt, the rest of the world could be tackled. What was 'sold' to those now decolonialised nations was the ideology of modernisation and development. The advanced economies could not expand without opening up all of those other economies. The 'Third World' was developed <u>for</u> those 'advanced' countries.

To gain World Bank development assistance, it was necessary to be an IMF member. This meant opening up to penetration by western goods, not allowing domestic industries to grow. The development loans provided for two basic forms of development.

First of all, the growth in cash crop agri-business. Under the cover of the 'green revolution', a series of western multinationals were encouraged to virtually take over the agriculture of the Third World - Cargill, Unilever, Philip-Morris, Continental Grain, McDonalds, etc. The result being the food-needs of these countries were ignored for export-crop production, to earn cash to re-pay loans.

Secondly, on the industrial front, a whole series of loans were made for projects which made huge profits for western contractors. For example, 30 US-supplied cotton-treating plants for Zaire - none of which work; Westinghouse and others supply the Ing-Shaba power project for Zaire - cost $1.5b; Maluku steel plant, powered by Ing-Shaba, works at 10% capacity; the coffee refinery doesn't work at all. Zaire has debts of over $6b. Cronies of Marcos in the Phillipines earned huge commissions through a nuclear power project placed on the side of a volcano, prone to earthquakes. Thankfully it will never be operational. The Phillipino people are still paying for it.

Western banks play with the 'Third World'. They hawk loans, looking for business, no matter at what cost. Projects are designed either by western 'experts' or western trained 'entrepreneurs'. Huge loans are given over to the <u>highest</u> bidder, not the 'best' (in their terms). The loan and the project is tied to the government. No reference is taken of the real needs of the people. Officials take huge commissions. Often the whole loan is stolen. The cash is then deposited with the western banks to be re-lent. When projects fail, the debt is passed on to the poor by the government.

The core countries of capitalism have those areas outside of the club, earmarked for simple tasks - the production of cheap cash-crops, extracting cheap raw materials, etc. They use the IMF and World Bank as non-profit making enforcers. Promotion to the select few is pretty well impossible.

The international division of labour leaves those outside the core, fighting to pick up what crumbs they can - importing exploitation in the form of multi-nationals, western banks, setting up Free Trade Zones, where little is earned, profits exported. Under 'Structural Adjustment Programmes' the poor pay back the mistakes and thefts of the bosses.

Capitalism

The essential problem - the only problem - is world capitalism, not one or more features of that. Many instruments are used, for instance the IMF and World Bank. The systematic exploitation of the <u>whole</u> world must come to an end. It is interesting to note that a particular World Bank project in Zaire has recently hit the news because of its callous environmental destruction.

It is time for those at the base of world society to begin the replacing of world capitalism, and its instruments, with ways of life that are truly free and anti-exploitative. ●

1968 - McNamara, World Bank President, emphasised the need for birth-control policies. 30% of Costa Ricans forcibly sterilised.

1973 - Hubert Humphrey - "Food is a form of power. Food is a special dimension of our diplomacy".
World Bank official - "We can only help the countries and people who have a better chance of survival, we let others die of hunger".

1980 - Arusha Initiative - "Money is power. This simple truth is valid for national and international relations. Those who wield world power, control money. An international monetary system is both a function and an instrument of prevailing power structures".

<u>Footnotes</u>
'Group of 5': USA, France, UK, Germany, Japan.
'Group of 10': As above, plus Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden.

Militant and other parasites on the poll tax struggle

WHEN NEWS BROKE in late September that over 300,000 people in the Strathclyde region of Scotland hadn't paid a penny of their poll tax (and that many tens of thousands more had only paid one instal-lment and were already in arrears), reaction from the Labour Party leadership was swift and unambiguous.

"The blame for such high levels of non-payment", Labour local government spokesman David Blunkett explained, "must be placed squarely at this government's door". Blunkett wasn't lending last-minute Labour support to this inspiring level of poll tax resistance. He was doing his best to make it clear whose 'fault' Labour thought it was to that so many working class people felt angry enough to challenge the law and refuse to pay, despite the advice of his party.

Labour controlled Strathclyde region angrily refuted claims from Tory central office that it was the council's fault that non-payment levels were so high.

Revolt

Council finance convenor James Mullin took the suggestion that they hadn't attacked non-payment strongly enough, as a slur on the professionalism of his operation and the dedication of his staff. Downplaying the significance of the revolt Mullin calmly assured the media that he was "not concerned at this stage. The money is coming in. Non-payment figures will drop once we've sent out the reminders." After announcing plans to up the pressure on non-payers, he took the opportunity to restate his council's "sincere and total opposition to the Tory poll tax".

The Strathclyde figures are the latest proof that the strategy of building mass community based campaigns of poll tax non-payment is winning considerable support in working class areas in Scotland. It shows the willingness of tens of thousands of ordinary people to defy the law, and to mobilise on their estates to challenge the right of their local 'socialist' or Scottish Nationalist authority to rob them blind. And most of all it shows clearly that the attempts by the leaders of the Labour Party and trade union movement to defuse and demoralise the non-payment campaign - by claiming that there is no hope of victory - are failing.

But if the Strathclyde figures will help inspire confidence throughout Scotland, there remains an enormous threat to the potential success of the community-end of the anti-poll tax struggle. It's a threat that could wreck the chances of a confident and independent working class campaign of resistance winning itself a major victory.

That threat is the continuing involvement, and undoubted influence, of the authoritarian-Left: most notably, the damage being inflicted on the struggle by supporters of the Militant Tendency (publishers of Militant newspaper).

Events in Scotland could scarcely show more clearly how openly the Labour Party and its allies in the trade union movement are attacking the anti-poll tax struggle. These events prove clearly that the campaign must assert its independence from, and opposition to, Labour. But left-wing groups (like Militant) are trying to ensnare anger over the poll tax, seeking to direct energy into demanding the Labour bureaucracy take up the cudgels and fight on our behalf.

Tying the campaign to the very institutions that want to suffocate the possibility of successful action, is a recipe for certain defeat. But that, of course, would only worry Militant - and their ilk - if their reason for being involved in the campaign was to do with defeating the poll tax. But it isn't.

If we are to counter the effects of Militant's involvement, and help prevent action being derailed by them, we need to be able to expose just what it is that they're up to. That means understanding what their real objectives are, and why they have poured so many of their resources into the poll tax battle.

Thick

Obviously, Militant are not the only left-wing group involved, but as anyone involved in practically any local anti-poll tax group in the country will tell you, Militant supporters are thick on the ground, and nationally their involvement is streets ahead of their nearest Left-ist rivals.

So what are they about? Militant - who deny they are a political party - seek to change the Labour Party from within into a Marxist organisation that will win parliamentary power through the ballot box. They plan to then create their own particular brand of highly centralised 'state-socialism' by simply 'legislating it into existence' through their Commons majority. They have been a constant, though minor, irritation to successive Labour leaderships, practising a policy of 'entryism' - quietly

(Continued on pages 10 and 11)

Militant have helped provide cover for the TUC's attempts at sabotage.

Anarchism in the Eastern Bloc

DESPITE MANY YEARS of repression, the anarchist movement in Eastern Europe is slowly and painfully re-emerging.

Many anarchists were executed, many disappeared into the prisons and concentration camps. The changing political atmosphere in the East, and the growing opposition to the regime, has given rise to new groups calling themselves anarchist.

We have criticisms to make of these new movements - some are deluded by pacifism, non-violence and the 'counter-culture', others seem to want to repeat all the old models of anarchism that have failed - anarcho-syndicalism for example.

But we must remember that these movements have emerged under great difficulty. It is the task of all serious anarchists to give moral and material support to the East European comrades, to make contact, visit, exchange papers, and engage in constructive debate. Through such a debate, and through their own developing practise, a credible movement can be re-constructed in Eastern Europe.

We ourselves must not adopt an arrogant, patronising attitude, but realise that we too can learn from the struggles taking place in Eastern Europe to create an anarchist alternative.

The Polish movement

THE 'NEW' POLITICS of 'Glasnost' seem to have had repercussions that the Soviet rulers did not forsee.

Amongst these is the development of a combative workers' movement, shown, for example, by the miners' strikes in the Ukraine and Siberia. Another repercussion is the development of anarchist and libertarian socialist groupings.

One of these groups is called Obsjina, which means 'Community'. The group was 'officially' founded in May 1987, though it existed for several years beforehand as an underground group. They edit an underground journal that comes out fortnightly under the same name. They publish an initial 120 copies, which are then sent out to fifty towns where they are re-copied, and so on - much in the manner in which most 'samizdat' (underground) journals have been produced in the the USSR.

The journal has correspondents in the main towns, and reports on strikes and demonstrations which the Party Press never talks about.

Most of the supporters of Obsjina are students, journalists and teachers, and they are in contact with workers through the Federation of Socialist Clubs and the Democratic Faction. There are many students involved, particulary history students, because they have discovered the truth about the past is not the one described in official histories.

Obsjina does not call itself 'anarchist'. It thinks that the essential aim is to achieve the communist programme - the disappearence of the State and its bureaucracy, the practise of federalism and self-organisation. The Russian anarchist thinkers like Bakunin and Kropotkin are their chief sources of inspiration.

The Democratic Faction is in close contact with Obsjina, and works inside the official Communist Youth organisation (Komsomol). This was unthinkable a few years ago, but under Glasnost the Komosomol does want to be seen as a monolithic organisation. This has given a semi-official status to the Democratic Faction, (though recently the Central Committee of Komsomol has announced that it was a menace to Komsomol and the Soviet State).

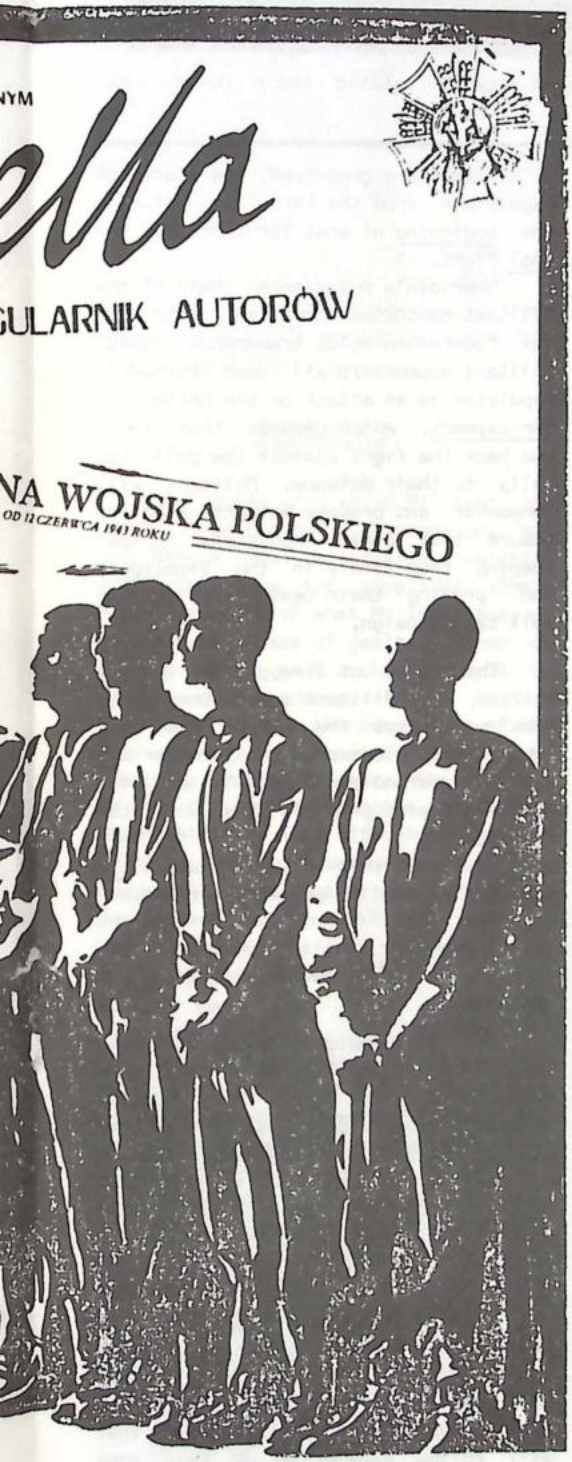
There is also the Confederation of Anarcho-syndicalists (KAS) which has

'A Cappella' - Polish anarchists applying their

members in thirty towns. They too participate on other informal local groups.

The Obsjina has called for an international conference of libertarians to be held this Autumn to help break down the isolation of the Russians comrades.

Outside of the developing movement, other occurences have been favourable articles on Kropotkin in the literary magazine Sovetskaya Kultura, and on Nestor Makhno in the literary paper Literaturnaya Gazeta. Makhno was an important figure in the anarchist movement which attempted to establish free communism in the Ukraine, fighting both Tzarists and Bolsheviks, before it was crushed by Lenin's Red Army.●



their politics to anti-war work.

Russian revolutionaries

THE 'REVOLUTION' OF August 1980 in Poland against the 'Communist' authorities was a catalyst for the re-emergence of anarchism, which had disappeared from view in the late 1940s.

It was in the student-world in particular, that attempts were made to recreate the movement. These attempts were not exclusively intellectual: some clubs of anarchist thought were founded, the most important being the Anarchist Self-Education Club 'Sigma', of Warsaw University.

The ideas of professor Leszek Nowak had some popularity. Some of the student movement was influenced by anarchism, in particular the NSZ (Independent Union of Students).

Anarchist

From August 1980 to December 1981 was the period of the rise of the independent union NSZZ Solidarnosc. Some of its members like Bujak in Warsaw were influenced to a certain extent by libertarian ideas, but soon the federal structure of Solidarnosc was rigidified, and centralisation developed in its midst. The military coup on December 13 1981 ended open activity, and the streets became the setting for clashes between State forces and the working class.

In this context, the Movement for an Alternative Society (RSA: Ruch Spoleczenstwa Alternatywnego) was founded in July 1983. In its paper Homek the RSA criticized the tactics of the Polish opposition, calling for a struggle against the military institution, and the total abolition of the Army.

It declared that "all power is bad... power must be abolished through building social organisation outside the State - outside of all States, not just the Communist State". A partisan of Nowak stated that "the only way to freedom which is open to citizens of socialist countries is to anarchise society".

In May 1985, the RSA urged demonstrators to resist the police who were attacking the crowd in Gdansk. A little later, the most highly-regarded underground journals like Przeglad Powszechny of Gdansk, and Tygodnik Powszechny of Warsaw announced the birth of an anarchist movement in Poland. Issue 6 of Przeglad Powzechny published an interview with 3 members of RSA who severely criticized the social and philosophical positions of Nowak, who they considered a 'quietist'.

However, RSA - working under difficult conditions, and with little in the way of funds - soon collapsed. An informal anarchist movement continued to work in various underground structures, and Homek continued to appear.

Anarchist ideas began to circulate amongst youth in the punk counter-culture. Several thousand leaflets on anti-militarism and anarchism were distributed at concerts by RSA members during 1983-5. New anarchist groups emerged: Pozinan RSA, Szczecim RSA, Independent Intiatives in Warsaw, Jutro ('Tomorrow') in Lodz, and many others.

Today, after the collapse of RSA, many anarchists are working within the Freedom and Peace Movement (WiP: Wolnoso i Pokoy). At first only the Gdansk group took aanrchsit positions, explained in their paper A Cappella. Now anarchist ideas have spread throughout WiP. WiP was principally working against compulsory conscription to the Army, but also took up ecological struggles, fought against the death penalty, and for 'free circulation' abroad.

Federal

Other groups exist outside WiP, for example the Warsaw group, which produced the paper Katatonia, linked to the Federation of Fighting Youth (FMW).

The latest initiative is an anarchist co-ordination: MA (Miedztmiastowka Anarchistyczma - 'Intercity Anarchist Liasion). The first leaflet put out by the organising group, called for the setting up of a federation, and for an end to isolation. Groups and individuals in 20 towns have given their support to MA, in Poznan, Szczecim, Wroclaw and Cracow, amongst others, despite the first conference being broken up by the police.

In the workplace too, there seems to be some development of anarchist activity. An anarchist paper Spartakus, is produced by dockers in Gdansk, and denounces the manoeuvres of Lech Waesa and his section of the leadership of Solidarnosc.●

Anarchists at Solidarnosc demo.

(NEXT ISSUE: Hungary's anarchist movement re-emerges).

POLL TAX PARASITES:
(Continued from page 7)

joining the Party and then kicking up a stink.

But as Kinnock's Policy Review has swept to one side the feeble forces of the Labour Left, they have found themselves unable even to shore up their traditional power base in the local constituency parties. When the dream of 'municipal socialism' came to an abrupt end with the abolition of the Metropolitan Authorities, it deepened the demoralisation that had followed the messy defeat of Liverpool's Militant-controlled Labour council, in the rate-capping struggle. They sank into the doldrums. Membership slumped, the paper's circulation crumbled. Things for the whole of the Labour-left looked grim.

Militant struggled on, desperate to find a new campaign that would give them the chance to re-group their forces, and that would provide cover for them to launch a major Labour Party membership drive, that could re-build them their power base.

Then came the poll tax. Militant's central committee under gurus Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe realised the potential that this held for the Tendency. It was decided that 'intervention' in the emerging poll tax campaign was to take priority above all other issues. Other minor campaigns were dropped. The decks were cleared.

Scratch

It was decided that the most fruitful area for finding party recruits (for both the Tendency and the Labour Party itself) would be in building 'community', as opposed to workplace, organisation. Militant's industrial base had never been very impressive, and pushing 'community' organisation - most of which needed building from scratch - gave Militant the opportunity to impose their own organisational forms on the campaign from the start.

It was overwhelming for <u>that</u> reason - and not because of political ideology - that the decision to build for 'mass community non-payment' was taken, in priority to workplace campaigning.

The intention, then, from the start was to use the growing resentment over the poll tax to push the issue of Labour Party membership, and to channel anger away from the need to build autonomous class action, and toward placing what were known to be futile demands on the Labour bureaucracy to 'take the lead'.

Scotland was to be their first battle ground. In most Scottish constituencies, Labour enjoy massive electoral

Under cover of the poll tax fight, Militant hope to re-build their power base inside the Labour Party...

support. But often, where the seats are safest, the <u>active</u> membership of the local Party branch is at its smallest. It's not difficult, therefore, for a determined band of 'entryists' to s a mini-coup, kick out the unsuspe old guard, and install their own su, porters in Branch positions. Stage one of this plan, means carving out some local-support on the ground. On the pretence of building support for the poll tax fight, Militant supporters went to work.

Door-to-door canvassing with poll tax materials netted good results. Slick sales talk won some people over not only to join Militant's brand new local 'anti-poll tax union', but to fill in a Labour Party membership card on the doorstep. The usual promise was that enough 'real' socialists could be won over to the Party, even 'spineless Kinnock' would have to stand up and fight the tax.

Alarm bells sounded at Labour Party headquarters in Walworth Road when suddenly bundle upon bundle of membership applications started pouring in from Scottish branches that no-one had heard a peep out of for years. Smelling a rat, Labour Party officials on several occasions have suspended local branches, while they investigate 'alleged irregularities' in the membership procedures.

This has been, of course, exactly what Militant have been hoping for. They are then able to draw anger and energy away from the poll tax campaign, into defending the branch against this 'witch-hunt' against 'socialists inside the Party'.

Militant could scarcely contain their delight when, in late September, their poll tax commander-in-chief Tommy Sheridan was finally expelled from the Scottish Labour Party. Their 'disbelief' and 'outrage' at him being booted out was, as always, well rehearsed. As far as Militant are concerned, the start of expulsions from the Party is actually the <u>beginning</u> of what for them is the <u>real</u> fight.

Sheridan's position as chair of the Militant-dominated Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation holds tremendous risks. Militant supporters will pose Sheridan's expulsion as an attack on the notion of <u>non-payment</u>, which demands that those who back the fight against the poll tax rally to their defence. Militant will manoeuver and provoke Walworth Road to ensure that other expulsions follow, keeping them firmly in the limelight, and 'proving' their centrality to the poll tax campaign.

The arena of struggle is neatly shifted into Militant's territory. The more vociferous the attacks from the Labour Party hierarchy, the 'greater the need to defend our leaders', and the tighter their grip on the poll tax campaign.

At least this is their plan - <u>if</u> they are allowed to get away with it.

Unfolds

As the campaign unfolds, so will the chronological list of demands they seek to rally the forces they control around. 'Labour councils: don't implement the poll tax', will be followed by demands that they don't fine non-payers. Once this fails, they will demand that Labour councils call off the bailiffs, and don't take non-payers to court. Once that it turn fails, they will demand that Labour councils don't send people to jail. And lastly, that Labour councils free those people they have imprisoned. The ritual condemnation of the Labour Party's 'sell-out' that will follow each stage of this programme, is as predictable and pre-

planned as is the next demand in the list.

Soon after this list has been exhausted, Militant will decide there is little more mileage to be made out of the poll tax campaign, and - counting up the tidy pile of membership applications that their work has earned them - they will move onto more lucrative pastures, taking their footsoldier-supporters with them. As they pull out, they will attempt to shut down all the organisations they established or were in control of.

But surely, given the level of their involvement, if the poll tax campaign were lost, wouldn't that damage Militant's credibility and weaken their support? Not a bit of it. They will argue that if the fight went down to defeat, it certainly wasn't their fault. The blame will lie with the weak-willed leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions. If only they'd backed the fight we would have won. Next time, we'll have to press them even harder to support us...

Like their other 'colleagues' on the authoritarian-Left, the depth of their cynicism, is matched only by their determination to manipulate situations to their own advantage.

Jealousy

The speed with which Militant has moved in on the poll tax campaign, has left many a rival Left-faction watching dumbstruck from the sidelines. Their disagreements with what Militant are up to are more a case of jealousy, than of disgust. Given half a chance they'd be doing exactly the same.

So strong was the commitment of the Revolutionary Communist Party to defeating the poll tax, that within months of them launching a new front organisation to suck life-blood from the struggle - the 'Smash the Poll Tax Campaign' - they shut it down. They saw the extent to which Militant had got things sewn up, realised this would mean meagre pickings for themselves, and so moved back to more reliable 'recruitment-issues', like Ireland.

The tactics that Militant have employed in pursuit of their objectives have in themselves been highly damaging. On a local level, where they have been unable to seize control of local poll tax initiatives, they have set up their own parallel groups: appointing their own members to committees that award themselves the power to make decisions and speak on behalf of the whole local campaign. 'Rival' (ie independent, genuine) anti-poll tax groups have then often been squeezed out, ignored and, where possible, poached from.

In the early stages, Militant have often been careful to disguise their operations - calling public meetings about the poll tax in the name of ficticious 'community' groups, etc. They have packed out subsequent meetings with supporters, who've voted each other onto 'executive committees' who from then on seek to run the show. Their supporters 'offer' to act as contacts for the campaign, to take responsibility for compiling address lists, and so on. Once their stranglehold has been established, they let their true colours gradually emerge.

Machine

By swinging the resources of the party-machine into action, Militant have undoubtedly won themselves a significant power base in the poll tax campaign in Scotland, and have now set their sights on doing the same south of the border.

They are now trying to win support among local groups for the national front-organisation they are launching: the All-British Anti-Poll Tax Steering Committee (guess whose planning to do the steering...). They're currently trying to scare-off (or absorb) other groups attempting to establish similar federations, including the London Federation of Anti-Poll tax Groups. The London Federation's hope to 'work with' the Militant-Federation in organising practical projects (such as demonstrations) seems doomed from the start: Militant have no intention of sharing power with anyone!

Militant's interest in mobilising working class people is in building tightly-stewarded 'pressure groups' that exist simply to lobby the bureaucracies of the Labour and trade union movement, and that have no power of their own. They will do all they can to prevent the poll tax movement breaking free of the straitjacket of those bureaucracies, and asserting its own agenda.

Throughout the campaign Militant and the rest of the authoritarian-Left have rallied to provide cover for, and give credibility to, every attempt by the Labour/union bureaucracies to head off the fight. Rather than exposing absurb token actions - like last year's infamous 'tea-break against the poll tax' strike - as acts of wilful sabotage, Militant have enthusiastically endorsed them, suggesting simply that the TUC could 'go further'.

At every turn they have sought to take the initiative out of the hands of working class activists, and give it back to the very forces that want to destroy the chances of a real battle against the poll tax.

So what can be done? Firstly we need to remember that Militant's influence - and that of the rest of the authoritarian-Left - does not stretch through anything like the whole of the community-campaign.

We should be aware that many community poll tax groups have already told the parasites to pack their bags. We should be in there constantly exposing Militant's hidden agenda, and encouraging groups do have nothing to do with them and their ilk. And we should be highlighting the fact that the successes so far of the Scottish campaign have been despite - not because of - their attempts to highjack the struggle. Militant's claim to have 'built' the mass non-payment campaign is as laughable as the SNP's (Scottish National Party) hamfisted bid to take the credit.

As for organisation, we should argue that the power in local anti-poll tax groups is held at street-level, and that mandated delegates from small local groups, make decisions for the area campaign. Leaving power with an open meeting of 'activists' - answerable to non-one except themselves - is wide open to manipulation. Left-parties can easily arrange to 'pack-out' the meeting on a given night, and swing the vote their way.

There are already signs of a 'fierce backlash' growing against Militant's parasitism. Non-aligned activists in Edinburgh have already come together to plan "to attack Militant head on" over their attempted stitch-up of the Scottish poll tax federation, and to plan - if necessary - to break away and form a genuine, autonomous network.

Twinning

A new 'twinning' initiative, (launched by anarchists, libertarians and poll tax activists in England and Scotland) aiming to put Scottish and English/Welsh poll tax groups in direct touch with each other, is a welcome development - by-passing Militant's attempt to become the sole 'clearing-house' for such contact. Through it groups can pool experiences, exchange speakers, and build solidarity.

We must constantly be aware what Militant - and their like - are up to, and organise to prevent them from wrecking the fight. We can best do that by encouraging the anger that exists over the poll tax, to grow into organisation and action that remains directly in the hands of the only people capable of defeating the poll tax: the working class.●

Contact: 'Twinned against the poll tax' (English Section), Box 5, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

Against the War

BAREFOOT GEN, Keiji Nakazawa; Penguin Original, 6.99.

PENGUIN BOOKS HAVE published a remarkable comic-strip story about life in Japan during the latter part of World War Two. First published in Japanese for children, it has been reprinted in other langauages, in order to demonstrate the full horror of war - particularly the devastation cause by the atom bombing of Hiroshima.

The book is absolutely gripping and can be read at a pace of knots. Its constant exposure of the violence of the militarised State, the cowardly brutality of its patriotic supporters, and the pressures to conform are clearly and frequently demonstrated.

War, militarism and nationalism had similar parallels in Britain with its hounding of conscientious objectors, and the internment of foreign nationals. Working class and peasant Japanese people, however, seemed to have suffered extreme privation and hunger as the nation's resources were directed to an ever more desperate war effort.

The actual devastation and suffering caused by the atom bomb is brought out in a very direct way. The reader is witnessing events as they happen.

Having praised it so far, there are some strange and worrying aspects to the book. For instance, extreme physical violence towards children by their fathers is treated as a normal, everyday occurence. The central character, the child Gen, for example, is variously punched by his father, and at one stage, strung up by a rope!

It is difficult to know whether these are true reflections of Japanese life in the 1940s (and perhaps now) or the product of the author's imagination. Equally, wife battering as shown in the book cannot in any sense be acceptable. In the book, though, women are generally presented as very strong characters.

Despite the above reservations, Barefoot Gen is very enjoyable, at times very funny, but definitely indespensible reading for those who want to stand up to militarism and its poison.●

NEWS AND ANALYSIS continued from page 4

Cambodian refugees

DURING WINTER 1978-9, after four years of Khmer Rouge bloodshed, Pol Pot's regime fell before the Vietnamese invasion.

Several hundreds of thousands of people, liberated from terror - but not from war and famine - fled towards the Thailand border. By December 1979, half a million had congregated there.

Very quickly, under the auspices of the Thai government and the United Nations, camps were set up. With the exception of Khao I Dong - under the control of the High Commission for Refugees of the United Nations - all the camps are controlled by different factions within the anti-Vietnamese resistance: Khmer Rouge, FLNPK (right-wing nationalists) and Sihanoukists (nationalist follwers of Prince Norodom Sihanouk).

The interests of the Thai government, of the anti-Vietnamese resistance, and of all those who support them (most notably the United States and China) combine to pin down the camp populations to an existence that is virtually that of prisoners.

All this in order to create a human strategic barrier against the Vietnamese, a firm base for the resistance, and to 'legitimize' the governmental coalition in exile - recognised to this day by the United Nations.

During the dry season 1984-5, the Vietnamese launched an offensive against the camps within Cambodian borders, in order to destroy them. In doing so, they forced the camp population across the border.

The Thai government does not recognise these populations as 'refugees' but as 'displaced persons', and they are robbed of even the most elementary 'human rights'. The Thai army - violent and corrupt - and the military fractions of the resistance, rule their camps as they wish, with indoctrination, militarisation and compulsory conscription, raising taxes on foodstuffs, etc.

The camps are rife with black marketeering, rackets and highway robbery. All of the camps are less than 8kms from the border, some only a few hundred meters away - within easy range of the Vietnamese cannon which have a range of 30kms.

One of the most perverse effects of international aid to the camps has been to contribute to the reconstruction of the Khmer Rouge's armed forces - to the extent that they may well be able to re-take power when the Vietnamese withdraw.

And for the displaced-poor and oppressed of Cambodia, that could mean leaving the misery of the camps, only to return to the horror of the 'killing fields'.●

Anarchy, Syndicalism and revolution

THE LETTER FROM PH (Organise! 16) responding to an article on rank and file potential (Organise! 14) tended to oversimplify, as did the original article.

PH feels, as I do, that improving pay and conditions at work are too central to the lives of generations of working class people to be dismissed as counter-revolutionary just because unions wage those struggles (the article might imply this).

If PH believes a revolutionary union could integrate that centrality with our final aim of libertarian communism, he should have shown how an anarcho-syndicalist union could really be revolutionary (it might want to be; it might think it is; but that doesn't mean it is). It does look like wishful thinking when such big gaps areleft in an argument.

However, several points remain to be made. A factor in the development of unions was the recognition that an organisation persisting in time across generations of workers would stand more chance of being able to retain advances made. Spontaneous groupings of workers would have to fight every battle over again, from scratch. This is not just an empirical, intellectual judgement - it is also engraved in the hearts of those families who have strong union traditions, remember what their recent ancestors suffered, and who no longer suffer quite so much.

So, to read that a demand for a 35 hour week (or any other union demand) is "really a demand for... more humane management" sounds fairly pathetic. Who else but an 'ultra-leftist' would describe the demand to live when faced with an armed copper's gun as "really a demand for a more humane police force"? Absurd and outrageous? Well it is an appropriate analogy.

I agree with the spirit of the ACF's analysis of unions, but it is spoilt if such miserable interpretations are possible. Less extreme generalisations might be wise.

In some contexts, unions have had positive effects including in some revolutionary periods. Of course unions always have serious shortcomings - every organisation of struggle has faults - and sometimes these are decisive. Even when unions so play positive roles the reasons can be external as much as anything else (eg if events move before the union has been completely crippled by elitism or bureaucratic inertia).

Anarcho-syndicalists, such as the Friends of Durutti in Spain, knew that a specific anarchist organisation was necessary. Revolutionary or anarcho-syndicalist unions need mass membership to be effective (in their own terms) - but most members would not be anarchists and would be able irreperably to change the theory and practice of the organisation.

Critically, unions cannot behave appropriately in times of revolution. Most critically, revolutionary periods have seen all maner of workplace organisation. What has been sorely lacking has been a clear and sufficiently loud, clear, consistent and respected voice from the heart of the working class arguing for free communism against the parties and power brokers.

That is what the ACF should aim to become, a task not made easier by unnecessarily alienating those in the union tradition.

You could argue that the whole history of working class struggle has been profoundly counter-revolutionary since it taught capitalism and the State how to beat us. It's true, in its way. But its not a political analysis, is it?

Unions will be around in one form or another until revolution triumphs. Sometimes they will have their uses, often they will be counter-productive. It is important that our political commitment is not devoted to them

- I hope the ACF continues to explain why, without resorting to simplistic generalisations that reduce complex matters to an illusory choice between good and evil.

WL
Gateshead

Workplace obsessed?

I ENJOY ORGANISE!, which is an improvement on Virus and has the potential to be a good paper once you've finally sorted out your 'aims and principles' and applied them.

Your criticisms of anarcho-syndicalism, for example, seem to me to be far too vague. What is the 'fundamental nature of unionism'? Are we talking about bourgeois unionism or anarcho-syndicalist unionism? Why confuse the two? How would the ACF organise in industry?

Do you not accept that anarcho-syndicalists have learned the mistakes of Spain, et al, and that your workplace-obsessed view of anarcho-syndicalism is out of date?

Fraternally,
RE
Avon

Editors reply: (With regard to the above two letters) As W.L. points out, "unions cannot behave appropriately in times of revolution", and we apply this critisism as much to syndicalist unions as to more obviously reformist trade union structures (See 'What is the potential of rank and file action' Organise! 14). This is not purely because we respond to anarco-syndicalists as 'workerists' as R.E. suggests, but because the syndicalist structure is not one that can automatically be shunted into arenas like 'community'or 'women's struggle' just because it's exponants have realised that resistance to the ruling class doesn't end at the point of production.

If the article in question makes the issue appear too simple, it's a problem of only having a limited amount of space. We hope the authors of the letters will be interested in attending our dayschool so we can look at the issues in greater depth.

"Our Labour" - CNT poster proclaiming the collectivisation of the car industry during the Spanish Civil War. But how do we get beyond simply self-managing capitalism?

Tin Tin

I'D LIKE TO briefly comment on the unfair review of the Tin-Tin story Breaking Free (Organise! 16).

Rather than the plot being implausible (ie a sponateous rank

and file revolt against exploitation), there are in fact plently of historic examples of such happenings. The most recent revolt took place in Tiananmen Square, and what about Hungary in 1956 or Paris 1968?

If one was to point to a weakness in the story, it is the weakness of all such revolts. They threaten the system, but cannot - on the basis of pure spontaneity - overcome it. It is precisely at this point that anarchist propaganda (the 'leadership of ideas') is vital to signpost the way forward, and it is at this point that the story breaks off.

As regards another of the reviewer's criticisms, yes, racism, sexism and homophobia are dealt with in a brief and simplified way - how refreshing! How clear to those, especially the young, who come across these ideas for the first time.

Tin-Tin is fun. It is also good basic anarchist propaganda.

CP
London ACF

AUTHOR'S REPLY: WHEN refering to the plot of Breaking Free as "implausible", I meant in terms of the escalation of protest and action from to the death of a worker, to a revolutionary situation.

'Leadership of ideas' is vital, but to is organisation, and that is something Breaking Free neglects.

And while the approach to racism, homophobia and sexism may be "refreshing", it doesn't offer any tactics for challenging them - especially in their institutionalised forms.

Yes, Tin-Tin is fun, but it is still not serious propaganda.

Workers against apartheid

THE ISSUE OF workers sanctions is a contentious one in the anti-arpartheid movement. The idea of workers taking industrial action against South African imports and exports is one that makes the fight in Britain a class issue. If the campaign against apartheid is just one of consumer boycotts and moral outrage against racism, it is simply in the arena of the middle class do-gooders.

In Leicester, two workers at Granby Plastics told their boss that they would not work on an export order to South Africa for 'Nyloil', a product used in the mining industry. They were promptly sacked.

The point has been made that taking individual action against the economy of South Africa has no impact, and that they would have been better off backing down and remaining in work so that they could agitate about the issue amongst the workforce.

But the workers, Ross Galbraith and Gary Sherriff, were faced with a reactionary and racist workforce and had no luck whatsoever persuading them to take action against the order. They decided that they had to make a stand on their own.

The effect of the sackings has been to greatly increase the awareness of people in and around Leicester about what is happening in South Africa. The press coverage has been phenomenal, and the issue is being discussed in other workplaces. A march staged at 8:00 am on Thursday 12th October to the factory drew 100 people.

It is only by workers being prepared to make a stand on such issues that other workers get the confidence to do the same.

Support has come from many quarters in and around Leicester, including many anarchists. They need a lot more publicity, fund raising and support nationally, however, and they are always keen to travel and speak at meetings about the issue. The next major event will a march in Leicester on the 9th of December. The contact address is :-

South African Solidarity Committee,
c/o Unemployed Workers Centre,
138, Charles Street,
Leicester.

C.T. Nottm. ACF.

Oligarchy?

REGARDS YOUR REPLY to RSW's letter about the issues raised by Michel's book 'Political Parties' (Organise! 16):

Firstly, Michel does not confuse anarchy with chaos when he states that anarchists organise "in defiance of their own principles".

By this, he meant that the pragmatic requirements of organising, and the psychological attributes and role requirements of those who make decisions, mean that all attempts at organisation except on a very small scale create oligarchies.

This "ironlaw of oligarchy" happens because effective decisions can only be made by small groups. The larger an organisation, the smaller the proportion of its members who can be active in running it. Further, large organisations require complicated rules, which give those who already wield power greater opportunities to impose their wishes on the rank-and-file.

It is in that sense that anarchists, concerned about these problems, organise in defiance of their own principles.

Regarding delegates, my copy of 'Political Parties' says that they "acquire a moral right to that office": RSW and Organise! misquoted this phrase as "require a moral right". I suspect this misquote led your answer astray.

With this strange phrase, Michel was emphasising that the aparthy and indifference of the great mass of people is linked to their need for guidance and direction. In a large and complex society, any change can evoke anxiety. So, the advantes of continuity and accumulated experience will often seem to outweigh the less tangible benefits of rotation - in the minds of delegates and non-delegates alike.

Michel depicts oligarchy as an inevitable feature of human society, not hierarchy, and he doesn't ignmore the social organisation of capitalism. He says that many features of society and human nature, which anarchist blame on capitalist social organisation, are actually nothing to do with capitalism. They arose inevitably as society became larger and more complex. This view need not imply any anthropological belief in the primacy of hierarchy and enterprise.

Michel equates oligarchy with injustice. He offers a simplistic critique of leaders and their personal qualities, and takes their presence in an organisation as proof that it is oligarchic - and therefore unjust. But he does raise problems for anarchists, in our organising and in our conception of the anarchist society. For example:

1) In a repressive state, the need for clandestine organisation heightens the tendency to oligarchy. What do we do about that?

2) When we become a mass movement, how can we make sure that any oligarchies which develop are accountable and/or impermanent?

3) Without money, forced labour or the free market, how do we check the power of groups/individuals who will co-ordinate the supply and distribution of resources?

Perhaps Michel is right, and so we should build an anarchism based on the recognition that oligarchy is inevitable? Is a society of overlapping oligarchies necessarily hierarchical? Perhaps access and accountability matter more than the elimination of all hierarchies? Maybe information technology can solve all these problems? Or maybe it can't and the green anarchists have been right all along?

We must seriously debate these issues. Neither anarchist ideology, nor the glib refusal to consider the elements of a working anarchist society lest we are though to be a vanguard, should stand in our way.

In solidarity,
JC
Nottingham

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

Those for the next issue should be sent to the address on page 2 by December 29th.

Please try to keep letters to around 250 words - otherwise we may need to edit them.

All letters must carry a full name and adrress, if the author wants their piece published. We don't (unless specifically requested) print your address in Organise! - but we may need to contact you ourselves. Letters without a name and address won't be considered.

We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it, and apologise if this occurs. Edited letters are marked at the end with a (*).

Organise! back issues

Back issues of Organise! - and its forerunner Virus - are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To acheive our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

5. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to acheive anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

6. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to acheive a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never acheive this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

7. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisation will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

8. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.●

♣ ACE Editions

ACF pamphlets are available from: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

ACE NO 1. Basic Bakunin: The ideas of Bakunin, one of the founders of class struggle anarchism. (50p inc p&p).

ACE NO 2. The Poll Tax and How to Fight It: Soon to be reprinted and updated, this pamphlet describes the effects of the poll tax, the inevitable failure of the Labour Party and Unions in fighting, and shows how to build effective strategies for collective action that can scupper the Tory flagship (50p inc p&p).

ACE NO 3. The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: A translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary process (60p inc p&p).

Also Anarchism as we see it: The original pamphlet outlining the theory, politics and direction of the ACF (50p inc p&p).

I/We are coming to the Anarchist Communist Federation's Day School, at Conway Hall, London WC1, on Saturday December 2.

Name/s: .....

Address: .....

: .....

I enclose 1.50 (unwaged), 2.50 (waged) for each registration (cheques may payable to 'ACF'):

I enclose details of my creche requirements:

Please return form to: ACF (London Group) c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION DAYSCHOOL

ANARCHISM FOR THE 90s

Saturday December 2 1989
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square
London WC1
(Holborn tube)

FIND OUT MORE about the poltitics of anarchist communism, and the activities of the ACF, by coming to our day-school in London on Saturday December 2 1989.

We be examining both current, contemporary issues - like the struggle against the poll tax - and looking back at some lessons of history.

All our workshops will be introduced by speakers from the ACF, and will be followed by discussion and debate.

Here just some of what we'll be talking about:

MARXISM IN DECAY - For over a hundred years, Marxism has presented itself as the only true road to human emancipation. Yet the ideas of Marx are fundamentally authoritarian and ultimately counter-revolutionary.

This workshop will show why the Marxist obsession with the winning of State-power has enslaved whole peoples in the name of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'.

WORKPLACE STRUGGLES - This workshop will examine traditional ways of organising against capitalism at the point of production - including trade unionism and syndicalism, and expose their failings.

It will argue for a different strategy for workplace struggles, and will stress the importance of the revolutionary process moving beyond purely economic/workplace battles.

POLL TAX - This workshop will examine the strength of 'community', and workplace, resistance to the poll tax so far, will look at the role of the Labour Party, the leadership of the trade union movement - and of the authoritarian-Left - in trying to wreck the emerging struggle, and will weigh up the options for the crucial months ahead.

PROGRAMME:

10.00-10.30 - Introduction, welcome & registration

10.00-12.00 - Marxism - a critique
or - History of class struggle anarchism

12.00-1.00 - Lunch

1.00-3.00 - Anarchism in practice:
workshops on: Fighting the poll tax
Anti-racist struggle
and more

3.00-3.30 - Tea break

3.30-5.30 - Workplace struggles

Refreshments - plus a simple lunch will be provided.

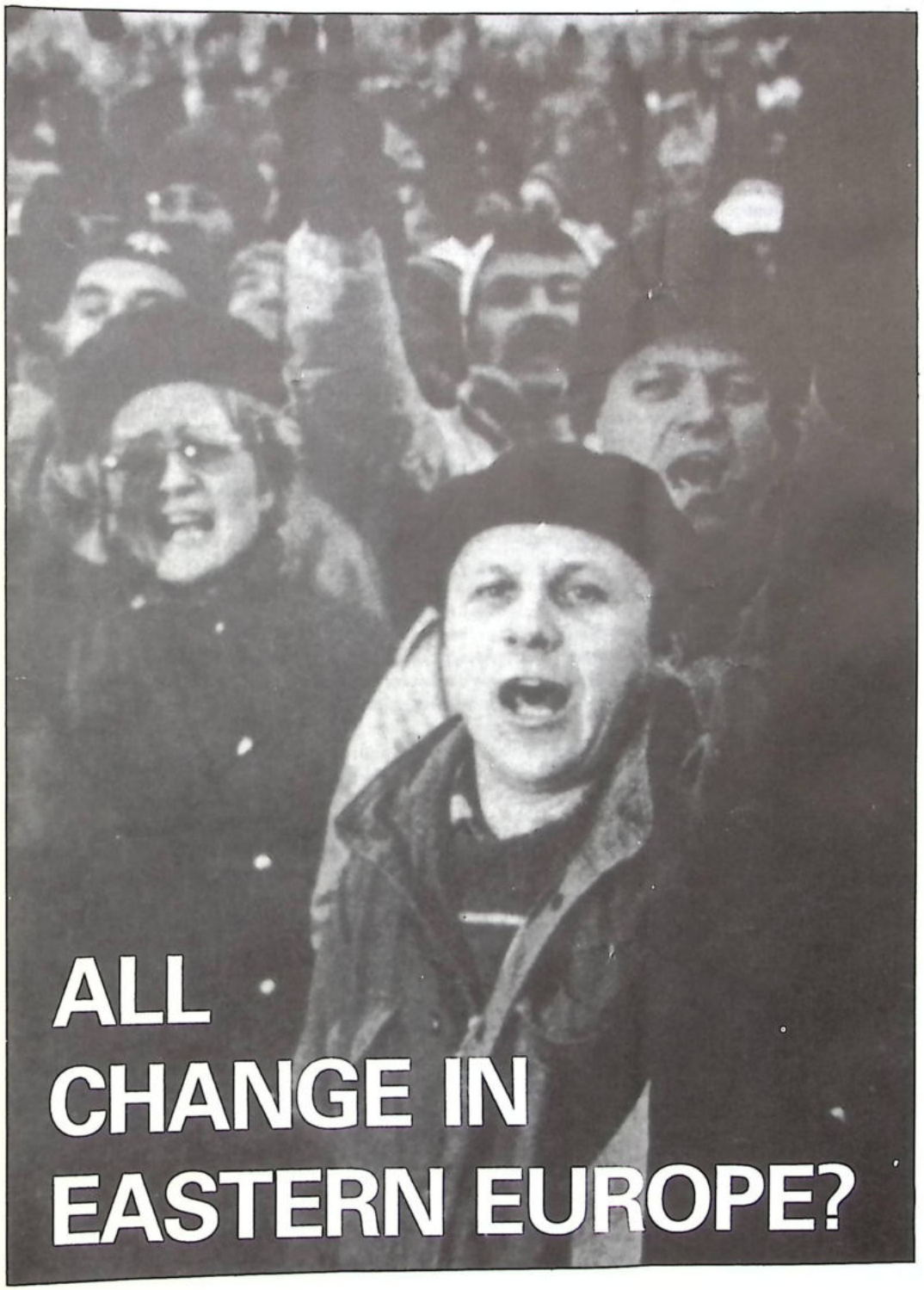
For details of other workshops, and to register fill in the form overleaf. Please try to book in advance.

MISC/16/4

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

30p
Feb-April
1990
Issue 18



ALL CHANGE IN EASTERN EUROPE?

999 CREWS' ACTION

THE REAL RUSSIAN OCTOBER

CIA IN PANAMA

GERRY HEALY: DEAD AT LAST

POLL TAX BATTLE

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the folllowing areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, and York.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX.

ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise! - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree withour A&Ps at all).

The deadlines for the May 1990 issue are March 17 for features and reviews, and March 31 for letters and the news section.

LONDON ACF GROUP PUBLIC MEETING:

THE FALL OF STATE 'COMMUNISM' -
THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST ALTERNATIVE

The East European regimes are falling. Does this mean the triumph of 'liberal' capitalism? Or is their an authentic alternative for those of us who are sickened by hierarchy and exploitation?

Wednesday Feb 28 1990
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1
(nearest tube Holborn)

PRESS FUND

THIS ISSUE'S PRESS fund appeal has brought in just over 100 pounds, which - though good - is way below our target.

Several fund-raising events are in the pipeline - but we do really need more donations in from readers and those interested in supporting Organise!.

The ACF has set-up as Publications Commission to examine the possibility of producing an agitational paper, and of improving the size and frequency of Organise!. But whatever plans we come up with, we'll need help in funding them - which is where the Press Fund comes in.

Our target for this issue remains 250 pounds. If you can help us towards that target, please send donations to:

ACF Press Fund, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham NG1.

SUBSCRIBE:

TO SUBSCRIBE TO ORGANISE! costs £1.80 per year (four issues) including post and packing.

Make cheques payable to "ACF" and send them to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Name: .....

Address: .....

(Overseas subs rates available on request)

THE ACF'S RECENT dayschool, held in London, was attended by about seventy people. Most of those present were defending anarchist/communist, or left-communist positions, although a few pro-Bolshevik organisations were also 'represented'.

The discussions during the day were based around five workshops presented by ACF members, examining the history of class struggle anarchism, Marxism, the poll tax, racism and workplace struggles.

The diversity of views expressed by people who came made the discussions lively. It's clearly necessary to thrash out areas of disagreement between revolutionaries if we are to achieve tactical unity in struggle, and we hope that the day was useful in providing an arena for this.

It was certainly positive in clarifying some areas of agreement between those present; information was exchanged and some possibilities for more co-ordinated activity were examined.

Since we feel the dayschool was such a success, we are planning another one later in the year.

The contents of part of the dayschool's polltax workshop paper will be covered in our forthcoming pamphlet on the issue, and the text may also be printed in it's entirety for wider distribution.

As well as the poll tax pamphlet, we have several others in the pipeline. The nearest to completion is the text of a speech on "the myth of Labour's socialism", which was presented by an ACF member at meetings in several towns last year.

The production of 'propaganda' continues to be a major aspect of our political activity as an organisation. Our recent national conference established a publication's commission, to examine the possibility of producing an agitational paper as well as Organise!.

We are currently clarifying our possition on Ireland (in particular the connection between anti-imperialism and nationalism), and our recent national conference set up a commission on Ireland, which will write a pamphlet examining questions arising from the struggle there.

Other major discussions within the ACF at present concern the relationship of sexism and racism to the class struggle, and how sexism and racism should be fought in practice. Our recent conference made some progress in clarifying our possition, as we agreed to abandon the use of the term 'patriarchy' as a separate social system. We will continue to critically reexamine our theory and activity, and welcome criticism and ideas from others in letters to Organise!.

London ACF holds discussion meetings on the first Thursday of every month at 8pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont St, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).

Copies of London ACF's Common Cause broadsheet are available free - with an sae - from the London address.

999 crews move onto the offensive

AS THE AMBULANCE pay dispute enters its fifth month, there are encouraging signs of a major rift developing between the striking crews and the union's negotiators.

At stations throughout the country, demands have been growing for a major escalation of the action: breaking with NUPE's 'official' strategy of relying on passive public support, by going all-out onto the offensive.

After 20 weeks - suspended without pay - ambulance workers have seen the dispute reach an impasse. They realise that all the union is offering to break the deadlock, are more 'heartfelt appeals' to the Tories to take note of public opinion.

Ambulance workers' frustration with the union's strategy, grew sharply in early January when NUPE's chief negotiator Roger Poole decided to ditch key elements of the crews' claim - a full 11.4% rise, pay-linkage to other 'emergency services', and a permanent pay formula - in yet another 'final' bid to bring Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke back to the table for talks.

Time and again, the union has shown its 'flexibility, and eagerness to stitch up a quick compromise deal with Clarke - well short of their 'official' public claim - but he has repeatedly rebuffed them.

The union seems genuinely surprised by Clarke's 'intransigence'. Poole has made clear the union's willingness to agree (to what in practice would be) a 'no strike' guarantee - if Clarke will only deliver an ongoing pay review formula. Having failed to sell their members the derisory 6.5% offer last year, NUPE officials have publicly stated that they 'never want to have to go through another ambulance dispute'.

Deal

In pleading with the government to let the claim go to binding arbitration, NUPE has portrayed ACAS not as part of the bosses' pay apparatus, but as an independent, neutral third-party who can be relied upon for a 'just settlement'.

The government hope to decisively defeat the ambulance crews and - with the help of the union - enforce a minimal pay-rise on them, to set a benchmark for the coming round of pay negotiations with hundreds of thousands of other public sector workers.

A major pay victory for ambulance staff would encourage the nurses, civil servants, teachers and doctors (whose pay rounds open on April 1) to press ahead with higher wage demands - and so threaten the government's 'anti-inflationary' pay-restraint plans.

It's the union's hopeless, dead-end strategy that has encouraged crews to begin to take matters into their own hands.

Some ambulance stations have again decided only to take calls direct from the public, hospitals and doctors - and not those passed to them by 999 controllers. Other crews are planning to re-occupy their depots.

What's characterised the dispute so far has been the constant battle between crews determined to keep an accident and emergency service running, and health service chiefs determined to stop them. While suspended crews have worked double-shifts without pay, ambulance bosses have lifted insurance cover on vehicles to stop crews leaving their stations; they've confiscated keys and removed batteries. They've ordered telephone lines to ambulance stations be cut. Several have threatened court action against any crew that responds to an emergency call.

The stand-in 'emergency service' being run by the army and police, has left a steady catalogue of fatalities in its wake. Hospital consultants report a 'significant increase' in the number of patients found to be dead on arrival.

At least three people have died in army ambulance road smashes - as untrained squaddies try to navigate tight city-streets at speed.

Bosses who've suspended crews have had no hesitation in calling them out on duty, when the army service is caught out of its depth. After picking up the pieces at incidents often made worse by the army's incompetence, crews have been immediately re-suspended on their return to station. The callous cynicism ambulance bosses have displayed over this has been beneath contempt.

Now some stations - in London and elsewhere - having begun balloting on all-out strike action: including the withdrawal of all emergency cover. But it's unclear (as we write this) whether crews plan to continue answering calls direct from the public or not - different stations appear to saying different things.

Push

While the moves towards all-out action reflect the growing militancy of ambulance crews, and their willingness to push beyond the constraints of the union, its a strategy fraught with dangers and contradictions.

An absolute strike might just force the Tories to cave in and come up with a bit more money - but it could also threaten the lives of working class people in need of emergency medical help, and undermine support for the kind of effective class action that would win the full claim.

Ambulance crews work in a service industry vital to other working class people - and the kind of strike action they can mount is different to that open to - say - car workers.

Ultimately, an isolated all-out strike by ambulance crews is industrial action still stuck within the 'logic' of militant 'trade

Continued over »

unionism'. Why must they fight alone?

Crews would do better to tackle a far bigger obstacle to them winning themselves a swift victory: their continuing - union-enforced - isolation.

Linkage

Roger Poole has made it clear throughout the dispute that the union regard ambulance workers as a 'special case'. He's emphasised that the union would in no way use a 'fair settlement' for ambulance workers, as a leverage to improve other health workers pay settlements.

While huge support for the crews' pay-fight exists right across the health service, and beyond, no real attempts have yet been made to mobilise that support into effective solidarity action.

Crews' growing disgust with their union, could be used as the basis for appealing directly to other health service workers to strike in support of both the ambulance workers and their imminent pay demands.

The widespread discontent that exists in the health service - from nurses bitter over regrading, staff threatened by competitive tendering, to opposition to the opt-out proposals - means there's a real basis for spreading the ambulance workers dispute, throughout the service.

In place of the competing union structures that will inevitably try to block such moves, open strike committees should be set-up to organise the most wide-scale plan of action possible.

A generalised pay-revolt throughout the whole of the health service, is exactly what neither the government - nor the unions - want to be faced with.

Spread

There have already been examples of industrial action in support of the crews - not just limited to the health service. In London on December 6, construction workers, local government workers, teachers, bus drivers, and engineers joined in a day of action. Rallies linking all health workers have been held at some London hospitals. Some Telecom engineers have refused to cut phone links to ambulance depots.

All of these examples are just a glimpse of the kind of action that is possible, if crews dump the divisive and damaging strategy of their union, and start to take direct control of the dispute themselves.

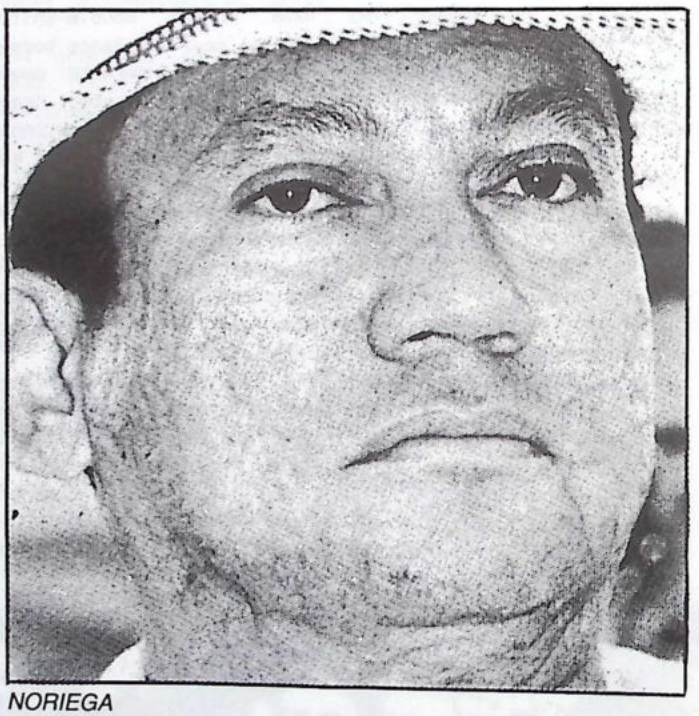
With the government feeling under increasing pressure from the simmering pay revolt (growing at Fords and elsewhere), victory for the ambulance workers could trigger cross-industry wage demands that would wreck all the Tories hopes of 'pay restraint'.

US topple their Panamanian puppet

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING the invasion of Panama by US troops on December 20 have again uncovered the role of the CIA as a major part of American imperialist policy. They have also made obvious the power of the Catholic church in Latin American politics.

George Bush declared the objectives of 'Operation Just Cause', which involved the transporting in of 7000 troops (supplementing the 13000 already stationed in Panama), as protecting US lives, honouring the canal treaty, restoring democracy, and bringing General Noriega to trial on drugs charges.

However for years the US have been happy to support the Panamanian dictatorships of first Omar Torrijos and then Noriega himself. Bush as head of the CIA had numerous meetings with Noriega, concerning military matters as well as drugs trafficking, which emerged in the Iran-Contra affair.



NORIEGA

Trained

Noriega was courted both as an informant on leftist activities in Central America and as a military ally. He was in fact trained in military intelligence by the US in 1967 and has supported the US in ventures ranging from the supply of arms and intelligence to the Contras in Nicaragua, to protecting the Shah of Iran for four months immediately after the 'Islamic revolution' in 1979.

The real reason for the invasion and this apparent turnaround by the US is more to do with the fact that according to the Panama Canal Treaty signed by Carter in 1979, control of the canal is due to be returned to the Panamanian government at the end of 1999. In spite of his usefulness to America, Noriega was never the most reliable of allies; he was also trading secrets, technology and arms with Cuba, the Sandinistas, the Eastern Bloc, Palastine, Libya and Syria, even as far as tipping Castro before the US invasion of Grenada.

This was known and tolerated but the last straw came in 1985 when Noriega refused to back America directly against the Nicaraguan government, and almost immediately drugs allegations appeared in the US press. The US is certainly not prepared to give over control of the canal to an unreliable and powerful regime, and required either a compliant puppet government or a reason to reverse the Treaty in the face of tyranny.

The invasion succeeded not only in deposing Noriega but also ensured the installation of such a government in the name of Guillermo Endara, who lost last May's elections due to a rigged ballot.

Church

The churches position in this is less clear. When Noriega entered the Vatican Embassy on Christmas Eve, the Vatican could not wait to get him out. How he stayed so long is probably for two reasons. Firstly the Catholic church is seen as one of the guardians against US imperialism, for instance in El Salvador where some church leaders have gained support of the left (and the left in Britain in some cases). It could not be seen to be giving in freely to an "occupying power" and compromise relations with other Latin American states. Secondly the church is well known for its worldwide money

laundering activities including those through Panamanian companies as became apparent during the Banco Ambrosiano scandal and the mysterious death of Vatican linked banker Roberto Calvi, who was found hanging in London from Blackfriars Bridge in 1982. Noriega would be in a good position to make things difficult for Vatican business. Therefore it is also seems likely that US call for the freezing by European banks of accounts controlled by Noriega, on the very same day as his entry to the nunciature, was more to do with threatening the Vatican who would stand to lose financially by investigations into banking activities. Money talks, while on the surface both sides argue morality.

Democracy, it is said, is now restored. What the media does not like to say is during the invasion, far from celebrating in the streets the end of a corrupt dictatorship, the working class were busy looting shops and luxury apartments and Endara was forced to mark the beginning his rule by declaring an overnight curfew.

Hong Kong hypocrisy

WHILST WESTERN GOVERNMENTS are welcoming with open arms the so called "Refugees from Communism" of Eastern Europe, there is an ongoing situation in Hong Kong where the British government is forcibly sending back Vietnamese immigrants, and preparing for the hand over of the colony to China in 1997.

Past years have seen the exodus of thousands of 'boat people' from Vietnam, to escape the poverty and famine caused by the war, and the economic restrictions imposed by the US afterwards. They also hoped to escape the political repression of the ruling parties - many refugees are fearful for their lives should they return. In November 1989 the British government announced its plans to forcibly repatriate 39,000 of the 57,000 boat people living in Hong Kong refugee camps. In these concentration camps, far from extolling the 'goodwill' of the West, the authorities have subjected the Vietnamese to food shortages and there have been outbreaks of cholera. Riot police have been sent in to put down any attempts by the people to defend themselves against being dragged away against their will.

Handover

At the same time the government has announced its intention to give entry rights to Britain for up to 50,000 'important' people and their families (250,000 in total), when Hong Kong becomes part of China in 1997. These include the top business people, civil servants and the police.

The hypocrisy here is clear. It's all a question of economic worth. Britain and China both want to inherit the top people and ignore the rest, and this is why China is extremely unhappy about the British legislation. As for refugees, they are worth nothing.

In Britain, some politicians have used the situation to argue for even stricter immigration laws. Tory back-benchers like Norman Tebbit have gone against the government, worried that being 'soft' on immigration of any sort will lose them support in the next General Election, saying that Britain never wanted a multicultural society. Others are using the opportunity to argue against the handing over of Hong Kong to a 'communist' power. Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, Gerald Kaufman also spoke out against immigration from Hong Kong.

Racism has always been used by the ruling class to divert our attention away from real issues. When the capitalists need cheap or skilled labour at home, immigration is not a problem - hence the recent welcoming of Eastern Europeans by the West, and 'valuable' Hong Kong and South African professionals.

When the labour is no longer needed, racism is used to section out part of the working class for scapegoating. Their aim is to prevent us seeing that the capitalist class is international, and we can only fight them as a united international working class.

New ACF pamphlet:

Beating the poll tax

Published in mid-February, with the arrival of poll tax bills in England and Wales just a few weeks away, this new ACF pamphlet outlines the kind of collective class action that can crush the Community Charge.

It examines the strength of poll tax resistance in Scotland so far - and exposes the role of the Labour Party in trying to put down this revolt.

It explains the objectives that lie behind the poll tax, and the cynical way whole sections of the Left have tried to move in on, and suffocate, the growing opposition to it.

This is a brand-new pamphlet, **completely revised and updated.**

Available from: **ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.**

Please send me ..... copies of **Beating the poll tax** at 60p each, I enclose .....
(Cheques made payable to the ACF)

Name:

Address

The *real* October of the workers and peasants

Libertarian communists criticise the current events in the Eastern Bloc from an entirely different starting point to those who describe the Soviet Union as a 'degenerate workers state'.

It was not just the 'evils of Stalinism' that 'corrupted' the 1917 revolution, leading to the necessary overthrow of dictatorships over the whole soviet sphere last year. Elitism, lack of accountability and brutal repression are the inevitable outcome when a Bolshevik party takes power.

This article, written only 10 years after the October Revolution by one of its most enthusiastic participants and virulent critics, shows the inherently authoritarian and capitalist nature of Bolshevism. It puts the current events behind the iron curtain in their true perspective. It also bemoans the abscence of an influential organisation capable of putting across truly revolutionary ideas in 1917, a criticism as relevant today to the situation in the Eastern Bloc.

This article was translated and published in 1974 by the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists, in London. It has been edited by the ACF.

THE TWO OCTOBERS, BY PIOTR ARCHINOV

THE VICTORIOUS REVOLUTION of the workers and peasants in 1917 was legally established in the Bolshevik calender as the October Revolution, but this is only partly the case.

Decisive

In October 1917 the workers and peasants of Russia surmounted a colossal obstacle in the development of their Revolution. They abolished the normal power of the capitalist class, but even before that they achieved something of equal revolutionary importance and perhaps even more fundamental. By taking the economic power of the capitalist class, and the land from it's country owners, they achieved the right to free and uncontrolled work in the towns, if not total control of the factories.

Consequently, it was well before October that the revolutionary workers destroyed the base of capitalism. All that was left was its superstructure. If there had not been this general expropriation of capitalism by the workers, the destruction of the bourgeois state machine would not have have succeeded in any way. The resistance of the owners would have been much stronger. On the other hand, the objectives of the social revolution in October were not limited to the overthrow of capitalist power. The workers faced a long period of practical development in social self-management, but it was to fail in the following years.

Therefore, in considering the evolution of the Russian socialist Revolution as a whole, October appears only as a stage, although powerful and decisive. That is why October does not by itself represent the whole social revolution. In thinking of the victorious October days, one must consider those historical circumstances as determined by the Russian social revolution.

Agrarian

Another no less important peculiarity is that October has two meanings- that of the working masses (including the Anarchist Communists) who participated in the social revolution, and that of the political party that captured power from this aspiration to social revolution, which betrayed and stifled all further development. An enormous gulf exists between these two interpretations of October. The October of the workers and peasants meant the suppression of the power of the parasite classes in the name of equality and self management. The Bolshevik October meant the conquest of power by the party of the revolutionary intelligentsia, and the installation of 'State Socialism' with its 'socialist' methods of governing the masses.

THE WORKERS' OCTOBER

The February Revolution caught the different revolutionary parties in complete disarray, and without any doubt they were considerably surprised by the profound social character of the dawning revolution. At first, no one except the Anarchists wanted to believe it. The Bolshevik Party, which made out it always expressed the most radical aspirations of the working class, could not go beyond the limits of the bourgeois revolution in its aims.

Bolsheviks

It was only at the April conference that they asked themselves what was really happening in Russia. Was it only the overthrow of Tsarism, or was the Revolution going further - as far as the overthrow of capitalism? This eventually threw up the question of what tactics to employ. Lenin became conscious of the social character of the revolution before the other Bolsheviks, and emphasized the necessity of seizing power.

He saw a decisive advance in the workers and peasants movement which was increasingly undermining the industrial and rural bourgeois foundations. A unanimous agreement on these questions could not be reached even up to the October days. The Party maneouvred all this time between the social slogans of the masses and the conception of a social-democratic revolution. Whilst not opposing the slogan of the petit- and grand-bougeoisie for a Constituent Assembly, the Party did its best to control the masses, striving to keep up with their ever increasing pace.

During this time, the workers marched impetuously forward, relentlessly running their enemies of both left and right into the ground. The big rural landowners began to evacuate the countryside, fleeing from the insurgent peasantry and seeking protection for themselves and their possessions in the towns. Meanwhile, the peasantry began a direct redistribution of the land, and did not want to hear of peaceful co-exsistence with the landlords. In the towns as well, a sudden change took place between the workers and the owners of industry. Workers' committees sprang up in every industry, intervening directly in production, taking it out of the hands of the owners. Thus in different parts of the country, the workers got down to the socialisation of industry.

Soviets

Simultaneously, all of revolutionary Russia was covered with a network of workers' and peasants' soviets, which began to function as organs of self-management. They developed, prolonged, and defended the Revolution. Capitalist rule and order still existed nominally in the country, but a vast system of social and economic workers' self-

management was being created alongside it.

By their very appearance, this regime of soviets and factory committees threatened the state system with destruction. It must be made clear that the birth and development of the soviets and factory committees had nothing to do with authoritarian principles. On the contrary, they were in the full sense of the term organs of social and economic self-management and were opposed to the state machine which sought to direct the masses, and they prepared for a decisive battle against it.

"The factories to the workers, the land to the peasants" - these were the slogans by which the revolutionary masses of town and country participated in the defeat of the state machine of the possessing classes in the name of a new social system which was based on factory committees and the economic and social soviets. These catch-words circulated from one end of workers' Russia to the other, deeply affecting the direct action against the coalition government.

October

As was explained above, the workers and peasants had already worked towards the entire reconstruction of the industrial and agrarian system of Russia before October 1917. The agrarian question was virtually solved by the poor peasants as early as June-September 1917, and the urban workers too had seized the means of production, and put social and economic self-management into operation. The October revolution of the workers overthrew the last and the greatest obstacle to their revolution - the state power of the owning classes, already defeated and disorganised.

This last move paved the way for the full achievement of the social revolution, the creative reconstruction of society already pointed at by the workers in the preceding months. That is the October of the workers and peasants. It meant a powerful attempt by the exploited manual workers to destroy totally the foundations of capitalist society, and to build a workers society based on the principles of equality, independence and self-management of the towns and countryside.

However, this October did not reach its natural conclusion. It was violently interupted by the October of the Bolsheviks, who progressively extended their dictatorship throughout the country.

THE BOLSHEVIK OCTOBER

All the statist parties, including the Bolsheviks, limited the boundaries of the Russian revolution to the installation a social democratic regime. It was only when the workers and peasants of all Russia began to shake the agraro-bourgeois order, when the social revolution proved to be an irreversible historical fact, that the Bolsheviks began discussing the social character of the revolution, and the consequent necessity of modifying their tactics. There was no unanimity in the party on the questions of the character and orientation of the events that had taken place, even up to October. Furthermore, the October Revolution as well as the events which followed developed while the Central Committee of the party was divided into two tendencies.

Lenin

Whilst one part of the Central Committee, headed by Lenin, foresaw the inevitable ocial revolution and proposed preparation for the seizure of power, the other tendency, led by Zinoniev and Kamenev, denounced the attempt at social revolution as adventurist, and went no further than calling for support of the Constituent Assembly in which the Bolsheviks would occupy the seats furthest to the Left. Lenin's point of view prevailed, and the Party began to mobilize its forces in case of a decisive struggle by the masses against the Constituent Assembly.

The Party threw itself into infiltrating the factory

While the mass of workers considered them to be the organs of social and economic self-management, the committees and the soviets of the workers' deputies, doing its best to obtain the most mandates possible in order to control their actions. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks conception of, and approach to, the soviets and factory committees was fundamentaly different to that of the masses.

Bolshevik Party looked on them as the means by which it was possible to snatch the power of the sinking bourgeoisie, and afterwards to use this power to serve the interests of the Party. Thus an enormous difference was revealed between the revolutionary masses and the Bolshevik Party in their ideas and meaning of October.

In the first case, it was the question of the defeat of power, being replaced by workers' and peasants' soviets. In the second case, it was the question of seizing power and subordinating all revolutionary forces to the Party. This divergence played a fatal role in determining the future course of the Russian Revolution.

Power

The Bolshevik's success is explained by their ability to substitute the idea of a Soviet power for the social revolution and the social emancipation of the masses. For them, these two ideas appear as non-contradictory for it was possible to understand Soviet power as the power of the soviets, and this allowed them to substitute the idea of Soviet power for that of the Revolution. Nevertheless, in their realisation and consequences, these ideas were in violent contradiction with each other.

The conception of Soviet power incarnated in the Bolshevik state, was transformed into an traditional bourgoise power, concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who subjected to their authority all that was fundamental and most powerful in the life of the people - the

Continued on page 12

[1926]
Peter Arshinov (1887?-1937)

THE BREATHTAKING EVENTS of the last few months in Eastern Europe seem to have taken everyone by surprise. There have been mass demonstrations in Czechoslovakia, as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Prague. The Berlin Wall, that hated symbol of the Cold War, has been physically destroyed and the border restrictions between East and West Germany have been relaxed.

Poland has seen a non-'Communist' participation in the government for the first time since the Second World War. And most dramatic of all, Romania has seen the demise of Ceaucescu and his corrupt Stalinist regime, as civil war broke out at the end of last year.

Who could have predicted - perhaps only six months ago - that one by one the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe would begin to crumble, and then, with the accelerating pace of change, totter on the edge of collapse.

However, despite the scale, pace and suddeness of these changes, it is possible to trace their origin in the events that have been shaping Europe since Stalin took power in Russia at the end of the 1920s.

Stalin instigated a series of policies that, in many ways, were the logical extension of Trotsky's 'War Communism'. Stalin, with the full backing of the 'Communist' Party, forcibly collectivised agriculture and instigated a massive industrial programme designed to 'modernise' the Russian economy. This was the ultimate expression of State power, a planned (or command) economy that was planned not by the working class who would do the work and need the products, but by the bureaucrats and gurus of the 'Communist' Party.

Worries

Until very recently, nothing much had changed in Russia, but it became increasingly obvious that the Russian economy, and those modelled on it in the Eastern Bloc, had failed even in the most basic terms : shops were empty, there were endless queues for bread, meat and other basic foodstuffs, and 'luxuries' (like warm clothes and shoes that would fit) were in even shorter supply.

This was all the legacy of Stalin's programme. Far from providing for the Russian people, Stalin's 'Socialism in one Country' had led to ridiculous and unplanned shortages and surpluses: anarchists have always argued that this must be the result when production and distribution are 'planned' by a centralised State, rather than by the full participation of the working class.

As Nikolai Shmelyev put it (ironically, in this context!), "Attempts to establish 100% control over everything lead to such spontaneity, to such an uncontrollable situation, that all anarchy (sic) becomes a paragon of order by comparison".

Party

It was clear to the 'Communist' Party that something had to be done if they were to retain credibility and power. But the inertia of the bureaucracy (which resisted all attempts at change), the enormous expenditure on arms that was required to finance the cold war, and the sheer stagnation of the Russian economy made any reforms extremely difficult to implement.

Added to this, previous reforms had failed. The events of 1956 in Hungary, and of 1968 in Czechoslovakia were witness to this. In both cases, it was not because Moscow wanted to crush reform movements in these countries that it sent in the troops, but because the reforms that it needed to revitalise the economy of the Eastern Bloc were so much less than the aspirations of the working class of these countries. People simply didn't listen to the reformers and given the hint of a chance, decided to take matters into their own hands. Moscow, fearful of a working class revolution toppling their regime, crushed the rebellions by armed force.

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he saw that for economic reform to be successful, political reform under

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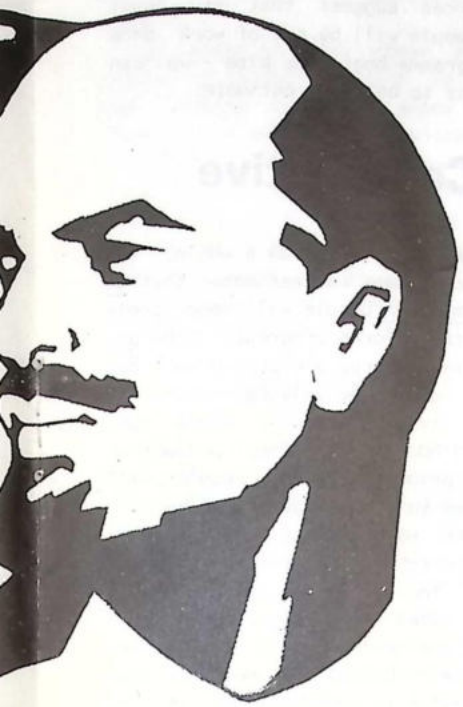


PLE
VER?

the guise of 'democratisation' would be necessary to overcome the inertia of the bureaucracy and the stagnation of the economy.

His hope was that this would lead to the rejuvenation of the economy, and thus secure the continuing dictatorship of the 'Communist' Party, and yet further strengthen it by increasing its economic muscle. It is this that is the driving motive behind 'perestroika' (or 'restructuring'), not some miraculous sudden abjuration of Stalinist doctrine.

Authority

Gorbachev's other well-known policy, 'glasnost' (or 'openness') is another vital part of this plan. If the Russian economy is to be reconstructed, Gorbachev will need to court the goodwill of Western governments to prepare the way for introducing 'free market' techniques. 'Glasnost', both within Russia and the world at large, is an integral part of this process. So, Gorbachev has broken with Stalinism, but he has absolutely no intention of allowing his class, the ruling class, to fall from power, nor any weakening of the CPSU as a leading party in Russia itself.

It is against this backdrop that we must see the events of the last few months in Eastern Europe. The 'Communist' governments of these countries have, since WWII, been the satellites of Moscow. They have been little but puppets, following Moscows line in all of their policies. Gorbachev and his supporters are themselves part of this same bureaucracy, and the reforms that they have forced through in order to introduce 'market forces' and retain power have lessened the overt oppression of the Soviet State, and have in turn created a 'space' into which protests could move throughout the Eastern Bloc.

The picture of 'peoples revolutions' that have toppled these regimes, a picture that has been put about by Western media and politicians, is quite simply wrong. We must ask, what is the difference between now and Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Tianamen Square 1989 ? The answer is: nothing ! Are we really to believe that a few mass protests could not be crushed by the regime if they wanted to ? No, it is precisely because Gorbachev sees these reforms as necessary that the room for these protests has been created by the bureaucracy, and why Gorbachev's supporters in the Politburos of these countries have not allowed the remaining Stalinist conservatives to crush them. Indeed, Gorbachev has made it clear that Russia will not back internal military action by the leaderships of these countries, a strategy not without its risks.

When we look at the changes that have occured in each country, we can see exactly how successful this has been. Poland was the first country to break with Stalinism when Solidarity formed a coalition government with the 'Communists' in the middle of last year.

But this 'deal' - which has finally seen Solidarity show its true colours as the ruler of the Polish working class, not the instrument of its emancipation - has left the 'Communists' in charge of the army and the security forces, much of the media, and allowed them the continued 'right' to impose martial law should they choose to do so. A few prominent 'Communists' may have been removed, but they have been replaced with new rulers in collusion with many of the old regime.

Revolt

The most striking example of how little these changes have to offer the working class has come with the 'revolution' in Romania. Despite the blood of many ordinary Romanians having been spilt to end Ceacescus dictatorship, little has changed.

It has become clear that even before the demonstrations in Timisoara and Bucharest, the so-called 'National Salvation Front' was meeting in secret sessions, ready to seize power should the opportunity present itself - in one of these sessions, the head of the

Securitate was even present! The army, quick to protect its own interests, only sided with the people when it became clear that they could direct and control events to their own designs.

There can be no doubt that there was much sacrifice and bravery in the brief but bloody civil war that ensued, but after the victory, bought with working class blood, it was the political opportunists of the 'National Salvation Front' who seized power, not the people of Romania. They soon began to co-operate with 'dissenting' 'Communists' from Ceaucescus regime, all of whom were supporters and beneficiaries of his brutality. At the moment of writing, all this resembles a 'coup' rather than a revolution.

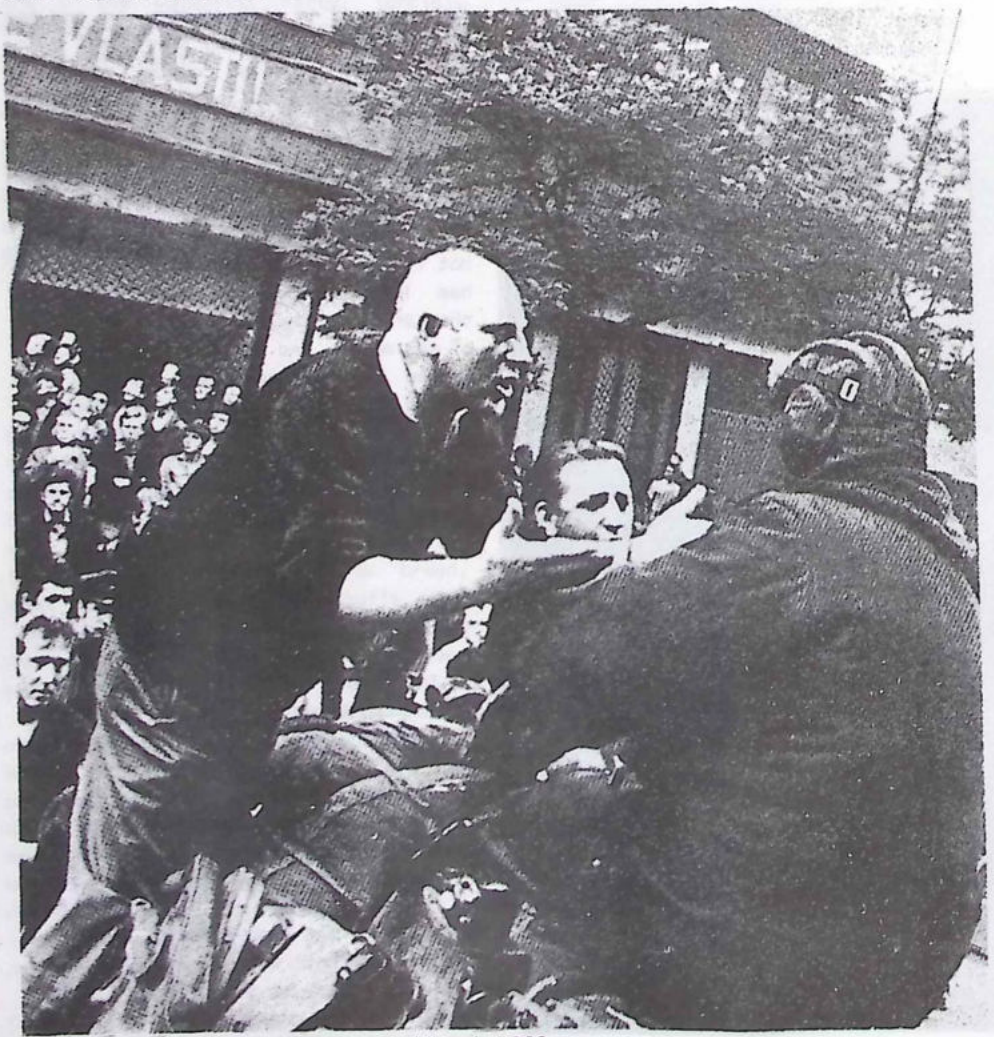
Terrorise

Meanwhile, the army remained their guarantor to power, and took to guarding the Securitate building in Bucharest that contains all the secret records that were kept on thousands of people, and were used to terrorise and oppress dissenters of the regime. These records have not been destroyed and no-one but the new authorities are allowed to look at them.

In the outlying regions, there have been reports that even these cosmetic changes have not been enacted. Securitate still walk free, 'Communists' still wield power. As Stefan Heym, a 'left wing' activist in East Germany has said of his own country, "The structures of the police, security and army are still there, and in the middle ranks, the same people are still in charge", and this seems typical of all of Eastern Europe.

This is just an indication of what seems to be in store for the working class of Eastern Europe. In every country similar groups of intellectuals, poets, playwrights, and 'dissidents' have surfaced to take power and co-operate with the authorities. East Germany has the 'New Forum', Czechoslovakia the 'Civic Forum'. The common factor is that these groups are all middle-class in nature, a ruling-class-in-waiting that will co-operate with the old regime in the new but equally devastating forms of capitalist oppression that they want to introduce.

Poland again provides us with an excellent example of what can be expected if these new governments are allowed to settle into their stride. Lech Walesa has vowed many times to introduce a rapacious 'free market', and has recently completed a tour of Western capital to encourage investment. The Solidarity government has outlawed strikes, and recent estimates from their own sources suggest that at least 400,000 people will be out of work once this programme begins to bite - we can expect this to be a low estimate.



Czech workers arguing with Soviet soldiers in 1968.

Competitive

In the Eastern Bloc as a whole, the Russian government has estimated that at least 15 million people will lose their jobs as the reforms progress, and uncompetitive concerns are shut down. But this will not be the only contributor to cuts in living standards: State subsidies in housing and food production will go, prices will soar. People will be expected to work harder for less.

In the West, it has been hard to find opponents to these changes. Everyone, including much of the left, have applauded them - some 'Communist' parties have even gone so far as to change their names! The Western capitalist media is portraying it as the final defeat of communism, and are hailing a return to the 'natural higher order' of capitalism.

There can be no doubt that many Western capitalists are rubbing their hands in glee at the new opportunities that will fall to them to make even more vast profits on the backs of the working class. The cheap labour costs and complicity of the 'new' governments offers them an ideal environment for their exploitation. Japan has just announced $2 billion worth of investment to Poland and Hungary, and the IMF is talking of making loans to Poland and Romania. The EEC has just offered membership to East Germany when its 'democratisation' is complete.

Despite this, both Thatcher and Bush have pleaded with Gorbachev to exercise restraint. Their fear is that if the pace of change is too great, and that their ally Gorbachev may be toppled, leading either to a slide back into Stalinism, or the rise of a far more hostile political movement rooted in working class struggle. Above all, the stability of the East/West divide has been lost, and Western capitalists do not want to run the risk of losing their new-found markets and cheap labour pools in an uncontrolled re-alignment of countries.

But there are still many unanswered questions for the West. These changes mean that the rationale for the Cold War, rooted as it is in the idea of the 'Communist ' enemy, has collapsed. The USA and her European allies have for years poured enormous quantities of capital into the arms industries under this pretext. It is difficult to imagine these multinationals taking kindly to a cut in this expenditure, and indeed most Western governments will be extremely

loath to cut back their armed forces, who after all are the guardians of the state.

In order to avoid these possibilities, it is not difficult to imagine them looking for a new enemy in the shape of Islamic Fundamentalism in the Middle East. Libya and Iran have already signalled in aggressive terms their ideas of a world 'Islamic Revolution', and the Soviet empire is already beginning to crumble on the Iranian border (see below). These might be the only pretexts they need.

Worries

Added to these capitalist worries, many Western leaders are nervous at the possibility of German re-unification. A united Germany would be a formidable economic power, and one that is in a strategically dominant position in Europe. Whatever the outcome of this debate, we can be sure that the issue will be decided by the rulers of Europe, not the working class.

Gorbachevs own position is extremely precarious. Other sections of the 'Communist' bureaucracy could easily move against him if they thought that the Russian empire was breaking up, or that their own power was being threatened. Just such a thing happened after Brezhnev took over from the 'reforming' Kruschev, with the Stalinist conservatives re-establishing their own program.

There can be no doubt that Gorbachev is expendable, and that he is not unassailable. He is pursuing an extremely dangerous strategy that many in the 'Communist' Party have shied away from before. Fully aware of this, Gorbachev has had no choice but to concede the right of 'self determination' to his Eastern Bloc allies, but is extremely reluctant to make such concessions in Russia.

Nevertheless, there has been widespread nationalist unrest in Azerbaijan, with many people in the province of Nakhichevan calling for their region to be united with Iran. In the same region there is now an ongoing state of civil war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Recent years have seen the re-emergence of active nationalist movements in the Baltic states, and the Lithuanian 'Communist' Party has just announced its formal separation from Moscow. Further secessions and fragmentations of this nature seem to be on the cards in Latvia and Estonia.

These nationalist tendencies have fermented under repeated invasion and Imperialist domination, and have found expression because of Gorbachevs reforms. But like all nationalist movements they are reactionary in nature, and the emergence of 'independent' statelets in the backwaters of the Russian empire has absolutely nothing to offer their working class, who will continue to be exploited by their respective rulers. But for Gorbachev, they are a formidable challenge, as the recent deployment of Soviet troops in Azebaijan has demonstrated.

A further challenge to Gorbachev's 'perestroika', and possibly a far more serious one, is the outbreak of labour unrest in Russia. The miners of the Ukraine and in Siberia proved to be one of Gorbachev's biggest embarrassments last year, when they defied the official 'no strike' policy. In so doing, they set up their own strike committees and support organisations, rejecting the official state unions which had become discredited as nothing more than another wing of the bureaucracy.

This dispute is just a foretaste of what is to come as the reconstruction continues, hi-lighting the role of the state unions as they begin to join in the governmental demands for wage cuts and job reductions.

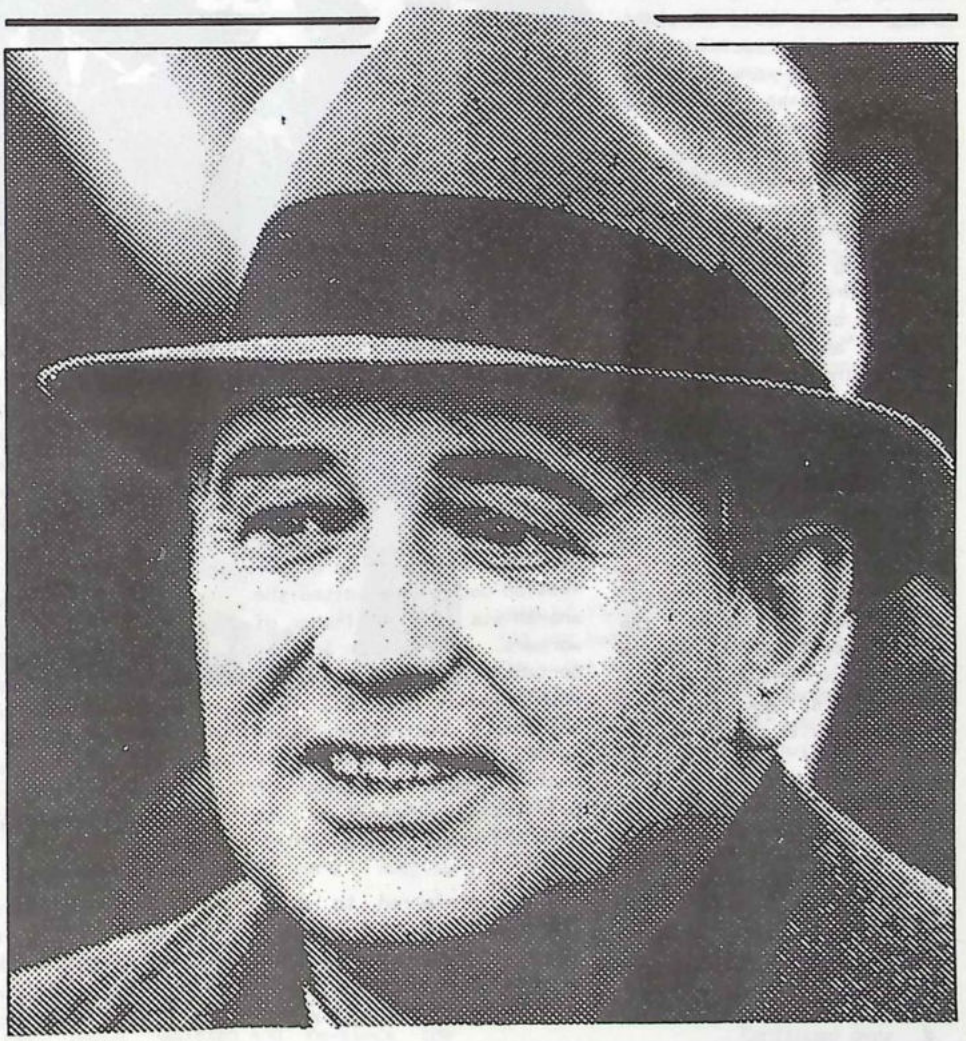
But there is no doubt that the bureaucracy would rather see the growth of 'free' trades unions after the Western model, than a revitalised class struggle by the whole working class. It is an open question as to whether these workers can broaden their struggle to call into question the whole process of reconstruction in Russia.

Nationalist unrest and heightened class struggle are not the only manifestations of the instability in the Eastern bloc. There has been an explosion of fledgling opposition movements in Romania, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Rhetoric

This not only exposes the Western rhetoric of demands being made only for a political and economic re-alignment along the model of Western 'democratic' and capitalist lines, but also makes it clear that Gorbachev is far from being in total control of the situation. The outcome of 'Perestroika' cannot be predetermined by the ruling classes, neither East nor West.

There is a great potential for revolutionary change, but in order that the people of Eastern Europe and ultimately Russia as well, do not become the latest and most tragic victims of the exploitation and degradation of capitalism, it is necessary to fight capitalism on a global scale. It is the working class of the whole world, united and determined in our own creativity, that can make true communism a reality.



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social revolution. Therefore, with the help of the 'power of the soviets' - in which the Bolsheviks monopolized most of the posts - they effectively attained total power and proclaimed their dictatorship throughout revolutionary Russia.

This enabled them to strangle all revolutionary currents in disagreement with their doctrine of altering the whole course of the Russian Revolution, and make it adopt a multitude of measures contrary to its essence. One of these measures was the militarisation of labour during the years of War Communism- enabling millions of swindlers and parasites could live in peace, luxury and idleness.

Another measure was the war between town and country, provoked by the policy of the Party in considering peasants, as unreliable elements, foreign to the Revolution.

Finally, there was the strangling of libertarian thought and the Anarchist movement, whose social ideas and catchwords were the force of the Russian Revolution. Other measures consisted of the proscription of the independent workers movement, and the smothering of the freedom of speech in general. Everything was centralised, from where decrees were enforced on the thought, actioin and way of life of the working masses.

That is the October of the Bolsheviks. In it was incarnated the ideal followed by decades of the revolutionary intelligensia, finally realised now by the wholesale dictatorship of the All-Russian Communist Party. This ideal satisfies the ruling intelligensia, despite catastrophic consequences for the workers; now they can celebrate with pomp the anniversary of ten years of power.

THE ANARCHISTS

Revolutionary Anarchism was the only politico-social current to extol the ideas of a social revolution by the workers and peasants, as much during the 1905 Revolution as during the October Revolution. In fact these ideas could have played a collosal role, and could have been the means of struggle employed by the masses themselves. Likewise, no politico-social theory could have blended so harmoniously with the spirit and orientation of the Revolution.

The interventions of the Anarchist orators in 1917 were listened to with a rare trust and attention by the workers. One could have said that the revolutionary potential of the workers and peasants, together with the ideological and tactical power of Anarchism, could have represented a force which nothing could oppose. Unhappily, this fusion did not take place.

Some Anarchists occassionally led intense revolutionary activity among the workers, but there was no sizeable Anarchist organisation to lead to more continuous and coordinated actions (outside the Nabat Confederation and the Machnovchtina in the Ukraine). Only such an organisation could have united the anarchists and millions of workers. During such an important and advantageous revolutionary period, the Anarchists restricted themselves to the activities of small groups instead of orientating themselves to mass political action.

They preferred to drown themselves in the sea of their internal quarrels, not attempting to pose the problem of the common policy and tactic of Anarchism. By this deficiency, they condemned themselves to inaction and sterility during the most important moments of the Revolution.

Organisation and a common tactic have always been raised as fundamental anarchist principles. But their abscence prevented them making a single organisational, enabling them to orientate the social revolution in a decisive fashion.

Thought

However, there is no actual advantage in denouncing those who, by their demogogy, their thoughtlessness, and their irresponsibility, helped to create this situation.

The tragic experience which led the working masses to defeat, and Anarchism to the edge of the abyss, should be assimilated as from now. We must combat and pitilessly stigmatise those who, in one way or another, continue to perpetrate the chaos and confusion in Anarchism, and all those who obstruct its re-establishment or organisation. In other words, those whose actions go against those efforts of the movement for the emancipation of labour and the realisation of the Anarchist-Communist society. The working masses appreciate and are instinctively attracted by Anarchism, but will not work with the Anarchist Movement until they are conviced of its theoretical and organisational coherence. All of us should give our utmost to attain this coherence.

Gulyai-Polye Insurgents.

The Bolshevik practise of the last ten years shows clearly the counter-revolutionary nature of their dictatorship of the Party. Every year it restrains a little more the social and political rights of the workers, and takes their revolutionary conquests away. There is no doubt that the 'historic mission' of the Bolshevik Party is emptied of all meaning and that it will attempt to bring the Russian Revolution to its final objective: State Capitalism of the enslaving salariat.

That is to say, of the reinforced power of the exploiters and at the increasing misery of the exploited.

In speaking of the Bolshevik Party as part of the socialist intelligensia, exercising its power over the working masses of town and country, we have in view its central directing nucleus which, by its origins, its formation, and its life-style has nothing in common with the working class, and, despite that, rules all the details of the life of the Party and of the people.

Nucleus

That nucleus will attempt to stay above the proletariat, who have nothing to expect from it. The possibilities for rank and file Party militants, including the Communist youth, appear different. This mass has passively participated in the negative and counter-revolutionary policies of the party, but having come from the working class, it is capable of becoming aware of the authentic October of the workers and peasants and of coming towards it. We do not doubt that from this mass will come many fighters for the workers' October. Let us hope that they rapidly assimilate the Anarchist character of this October, and that they come to its aid. For ourselves, let us indicate this character as much as possible, and help the masses to reconquer and conserve their great revolutionary achievements.

Gerry Healy: a red who's better dead

GERRY HEALY - FOR 35 years leader of one of the largest, most influential and wealthiest Trotskyist organisations in post-War Britain - died of a heart attack at his London home on December 14, aged 76. This happy event was long overdue. As one overjoyed obituary writer commented: 'With a bit of luck, we'll never see his like again'.

Healy - General Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party (the WRP) and its forerunners since the 1950s - was unquestionably the single most universally hated figure on the Trotskyist Left.

Healy gained tabloid notoriety in 1985 when the WRP exploded after it came to light that This Great Trotskyist Leader had been raping young women in the Party's youth section for years; had been guilty of 'the physical abuse of comrades and slander against political opponents'; and of setting up shady and corrupt financial deals with the governments of Iran, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. These 'hidden' crimes had been carried out with the full knowledge (and active assistance) of Healy-loyalists on the Party's Central Committee.

Obedience

The chain reaction of splits and re-splits that followed The Healy Revelations, saw the Party fragment within weeks into half a dozen warring factions - battling it out for control of the Party's substantial assets: printing presses, youth centres, bookshops, the heavily fortified central office, and the party's daily-paper The News Line.

There is no definitive, impartial history of the violent and bitter power struggle that followed Healy's fall from office, since - naturally enough - each faction has written their own, claiming that their breakaway is the legitimate descendant of the real WRP tradition. But there's no need to pick through the confusion of claim and counter-claim in search of the The Truth about the split. In the WRP Story there really are no 'good guys' - just rival sets of bad ones.

The exposure of Healy was not down to the 'shock discoveries' of aghast comrades who'd just uncovered the sordid truth and now felt compelled to tell the world.

The one thing that unites the leaders of all the subsequent WRP-splits is that they were all high enough up in the Party to know exactly what Healy was up to. And they all chose to keep quiet about it for years, until some of them decided that (for their own reasons) the time was right to move against him. It was a straightforward cynical, tactical decision. Morality didn't get a look in.

That the resultant power struggle descended into episodes reminiscent of a gangland war should come as no real surprise - seeing as, in many ways, that's exactly what it was. Assault, burglary, raids on rival premises, the physical seizure of Party property, asset stripping, street-fighting - you name it, it went on. One group sledge-hammered its way into a Party bookshop

to stake their 'rightful claim' to the stock. Court room battles became common - with defendants readily denouncing their opponents 'flight to bourgeois law', whilst keeping quiet about the legal cases that they were lodging themselves.

For a while there were two rival daily editions of The News Line, with vans following each other around London bookshops to buy up all the copies of the 'bogus' edition and re-stock the 'genuine' one - often several times a day.

As the Party Empire gradually became carved up between the ex-comrades, the full extent of the WRP's collapse became clear. Where once - under the ruthless iron fist of Healy - there had been a large, disciplined, tightly organised Trotskyist machine, now (admist the wreckage) were eight or nine burnt-out grouplets, waging war on themselves and eachother - with aptly-named protaganists like Slaughter and Hunter slugging it out for control of the dwindling membership.

• At Gerry Healy's funeral at Mortlake crematorium in London on December 28, bouncers at the gates excluded anyone likely to upset the Great Man's send-off. This was probably a wise idea. There'd be no shortage of ex-Party members who'd happily dance on his coffin given half a chance - or ram a wooden stake through the lid into his heart just to make sure.

Loyal

The ever-loyal Redgraves - Corin and Vanessa - presided over the service, attended by representatives from both WRPs (Workers Press and News Line) and by Labour MP Ken Livingstone (who apparently was 'not very happy' when photographed). Corin explained that the collapse of the WRP in 1985 was - in fact - all a clever plot 'engineered by the state', designed to get Healy and wreck the Party.

In her three-page obituary in The News Line on December 21, Shelia Torrance too neglects to mention the rape of YS women, and other crimes that led to Healy's ousting. She points to the desire of 'a small group of spiteful, selfish petit-bourgeois intellectuals' inside the WRP who sought to 'smash the party' in pursuit of 'their quest for personal comfort and even better jobs'. At the time of the splits, ex-Party members report that - in protecting Healy - she argued that his greatness as a political leader far outweighed any trifling details about his personal life.

Describing Healy as a 'giant of Trotskyism', Torrance declares that

Continued over ❯

'when those who revile him are forgotten in the dustbin of history, his acheivements will inspire new generations' (to do what we aren't told). In Vanessa Redgrave's tearful farewell to her 'dear comrade' in The Guardian on December 18, she honours the debt she owes Healy for all her 'subsequent development as a political woman and artist'.

Dot Gibson - at one-time Healy's close 'financial adviser' and trusted forger of the Party's accounts - takes a different view. In an obituary in the other-WRP's paper, Workers Press (on Jan 6), she denounces him as a 'renegade from Trotsky' who 'depended on the Redgraves as a dead man relies on a life support unit'. A later piece in The Guardian by Jim Higgins (December 22) points out that Healy's bullying, paranoic meglomania had created 'more ex-Trotskyists than anyone else except Stalin'.

Paranoia

Whilst in power, Healy ran the WRP with an ideological rod of iron (and an actual iron rod when necessary). His swift despatching of perceived rivals in the Party, and his obssessive fear that the Party was constantly under surveillance by MI5, helped create a climate of uncertainty and fear of infiltration that Healy used ruthlessly to protect his position at the top. He broke up sections of the Party that he feared might be getting strong enough to mount a challenge to his leadership, and frequently 'uncovered plots' to destroy the Party.

Healy demanded a staggering amount of work, committment and money from the Party faithful. One of the purposes of The News Line was to absorb as much of the membership's energy as possible, through the never-ending round of writing, photographing, selling, fund-raising, and daily paper-round distribution. A membership locked in a cycle of hyper-activity was a membership less able to question the Party apparatus.

One of the criticisms made by Healy's opponents in the split, was that the constant demands and costs of the daily-paper made it a liability not an asset. To Healy's supporters this claim was a heresy of the highest order.

Healy ended his political life as he began it - as a supporter of, and apologist for, the Soviet bureaucracy. In 1928 he had joined the Young Communist League as a fresh-faced young Stalinist. After the demise of the WRP, Healy and the Redgraves formed The Marxist Party which quickly decided that Gorbachev's 'Political Revolution' was 'entirely progressive' in character.

In The News Line Torrance explains this political about-turn was due to the 'shock' Healy suffered after the split of the Party, which was - apparently - 'too much for him to bear'.

Five years after the split, have the different splinters of the WRP learnt anything from the 'degeneration' of their Great Leader and the collapse of their Party organisation?

The answer - clearly - is no. Even now, no faction has offered the slightest explanation for Healy's behaviour. How was it that this Giant of Trotskyism became a corrupt, madman, mobster and rapist?

Splits

No breakaway-Party has drawn the slighest connection between Healy's actions and the nature of Trotskyist political organisation. In place of blind obedience to the omnipotence of Healy's 'political genius' they have simply substituted a new leadership clique for the membership to unquestioningly obey.

Healy is explained away as an 'abberation': an unfortunate accident. You know, a bit like Stalin.

In 1985, in the final hours before Healy and his supporters were forced to flee the Party headquarters, they removed crucial files from the WRP's records that have never been recovered. The evidence of Healy's crimes that we know about come largely from files that they overlooked.

What horrors were documented in the files that Healy took and surely destroyed? Now that the old bastard is dead, we'll never know.

Trashing tyrant Lenin

OPEN LETTER TO COMRADE LENIN, Herman Gorter; Wildcat, BM CAT, London WC1N 3XX, 3.00

THIS IS A long overdue but very welcome reprint of Gorter's reply to Lenin's pamplet Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder. Written in 1920, the Open Letter first appeared in English in Sylvia Pankhurst's anti-parliamentarian communist paper Workers' Dreadnought in 1921. This is its second printing in English after seventy years of obscurity.

Battle

The Open Letter outlines the arguments of the 'Left-Wing' communists and their disagreement with the opportunist reformism of Lenin and the Third International. Gorter was a member of the Communist Workers' Party of Germany (KAPD) which had formed after differences with the German Communist Party (KPD). The political arguments were not peculiar to Germany, they existed in the Communist parties in the more 'advanced' capitalist countries at the time, and the disagreements are most clearly seen in Left-Wing Communism and the Open Letter.

In Left-Wing Communism Lenin claimed that the coming European revolutions would be similar in nature to the Russian Revolution, and therefore European communists should follow the "fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics". These "tactics" included participation within reactionary parliaments and trade unions "because they will still find workers who are duped by the priests and the dreariness of rural life". Lenin's argument is that wherever the workers are, the revolutionary must go to them, and encourage their faith in bourgeois parliaments and unions because that is where the "underdeveloped, downtrodden, ignorant rural masses" are.

Opportunist

In the Open Letter, Gorter calls Lenin's argument an "opportunist fraud" and correctly maintains that all bourgeois parties both in and outside of parliament are opposed to the workers and the revolution, and therefore no revolutionary should deceitfully encourage proletarian "illusions of the impossible" in bourgeois parliamentary democracy.

To Lenin he writes of Left-Wing Communism "it is the first book of yours which is no good. For Western Europe it is the worst book imaginable".

In his Open Letter, Gorter does not criticise Lenin because his tactics are 'wrong'; he writes that Lenin's tactics were right for Russia (although he later changed his opinion) but wrong for Europe because of the different nature of capitalism. And although Gorter argued for organisation from below and against the dictatorship of the party, he still defended the need for "centralisation and iron discipline".

History has shown the counter-revolutionary nature of centralised organisation, whatever the context. Overall though, the book is well worth reading, both as a historic document, and a concise criticism of Leninism.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

4. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

5. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to acheive anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

6. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to acheive a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives wil always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while me must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never acheive this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

7. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

8. As anarchist we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

♣ ACE Editions

ACF pamphlets are available from: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

ACE NO 1. Basic Bakunin: The ideas of Bakunin, one of the founders of class struggle anarchism. (50p in p&p).

ACE NO 3. The Libertarian Communist Manifesto: A translation from the French of the Fontenis document outlining the need for coherent class politics and a strong anarchist organisation to influence the revolutionary proces. (60p p&p).

Also Anarchism as we see it: The original pamphlet outlining the theory, politics and direction of the ACF (50p inc p&p).

Also Russia 1917 - A Libertarian Communist Supplement: Describes what happened in the soviets and factory committees (10p & sae).

Want to know more?

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LABOUR'S POLL TAX PANIC

WITH ONLY THREE months to go until the first poll tax bills are due to be sent out in England and Wales, Labour councils in Scotland are conceding that their attempts to break the non-payment movement - through threats, intimidation and legal action - are failing.

Strathclyde region despatched 400,000 'final demands' at the end of last year, ordering non-payers to settle the whole of the first year's poll tax within 7 days 'or face the consequences'. When - at the end of the week - over 80% of those 'final' demands had been totally ignored, exasperated council officials admitted that the response had been 'disappointing'. Strathclyde's experience has been typical. Lothian regional council are now well over 25.5 million pounds short in poll tax receipts. They're having to borrow money to make up the shortfall.

Ineffective

Many Scottish councils are now abandoning the use of bailiffs raids against those fined for non-payment, because they have proved so violently unpopular, and - in the face of large scale community mobilisations against them - completely ineffective.

Their plans to turn, instead, to 'arrestments' direct from people's bank accounts have also run into trouble. In late-November - the head of Scotland's clearing banks announced that they 'would be unable to cope with thousands of requests to trace the bank account details of thousands of non-payers'. Even if councils insisted on the costly and time-consuming process, he couldn't guarantee they would be able to find even 5-6% of the names.

Faced with a seeming dead-end in either direction, and an ever growing back-log of court action, Scottish councils are rapidly running out of options. Eric Milligan, head of Lothian region Labour council's finance department, spoke for many councils when, in December, he admitted: 'Such is the scale of the non-payment movement in our region, that we may have to write-off large sums of outstanding poll tax'.

The December deadline for completing registration in England and Wales passed with many councils nowhere near finishing the job. Some have publicly warned the government that - because of the bureaucratic chaos that they're in - they may be unable to dispatch the first bills until May or June: putting everyone two months in arrears to start with.

Further government changes to poll tax law now seem certain, following the outraged response by industry bosses to news of the levels of Uniformed Business Rate (UBR) they'll be paying from April. In what can only be explained as a genuine civil service cock-up the upshot of the UBR calculations is that small business bosses in the south-east (ie loyal Tory voters in the Tory heartlands) face crippling rate rises, while big businesses in the Labour-heartlands of the north and north-east are set to enjoy massive cuts in their bills. The main bosses organisation - the CBI - has warned of tens of thousands of job losses and hundreds of business-bankrupcies.

The reason this should concern us, is, that in finding the money to sort out this mistake and relieve the burden on business, the Tories may well look to increasing the burden on domestic poll tax - meaning bigger poll tax bills - or in reducing the level of grant they give to councils - meaning an even greater threat to services. Businesses meanwhile, will look to make cost-savings by reducing their workforces, or trying to drive down wages.

Action on the industrial front against the poll tax received a major boost in January, when a majority of 17,000 local council workers in Leicester voted in favour of industrial action, if the city council tried to issue any redundancies because of poll tax-driven service cuts. The decision has already forced the council to back-track and - for now - withdraw the threat of job losses. Leicester's example is certain to be followed by other council workforces as the extent of the threat to jobs and services hits home in the months ahead, as councils announce their budgets for the coming year.

Elsewhere, dole office workers in London have been on strike in protest at management plans to get them to pass claimants details from DSS files straight to poll tax officials. They've been joined by other groups of dole office workers who plan to refuse to process 'arrestments' of unpaid poll tax from non-payers who are signing on. And in Edinburgh, a group of local government workers are among the latest to announce plans to mount walk-outs if any employee in their department is penalised for non-payment.

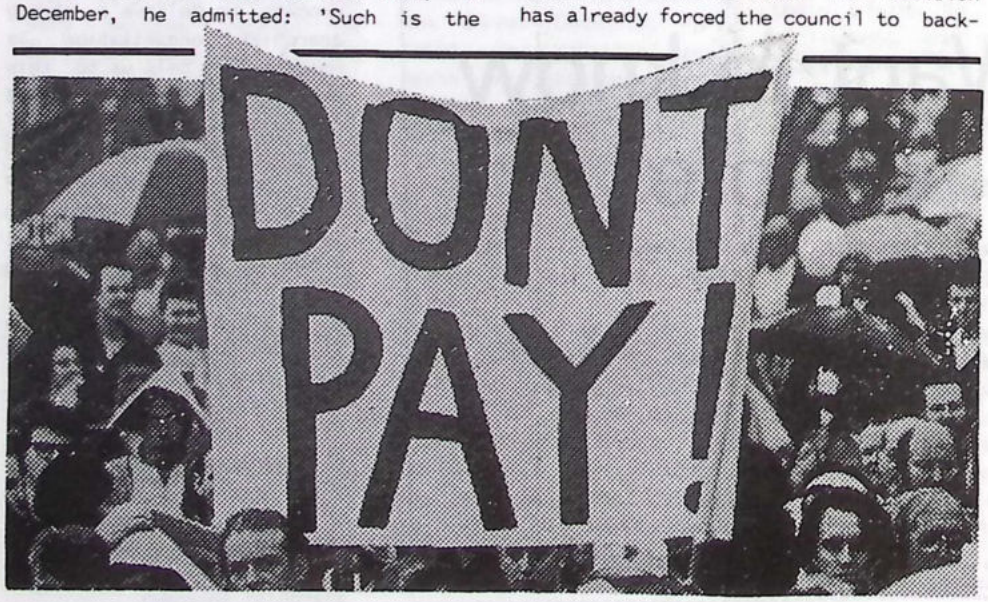
Anxiety

The Labour Party's growing anxiety over the anti-poll tax movement is reflected in the decision of the National Executive not to sanction a national demonstration against the Charge in April - against the advice of Labour's front-bench poll tax spokesmen who desperately want an 'initiative' they can hide behind. In the past, Labour has been willing to sponsor harmless demonstrations as a low-risk way of parading its 'anti-poll tax' credentials. Now, Kinnock is quoted as fearing that groups committed to non-payment and strike action might 'take advantage' of the situation and expose Labour's true poll tax colours.

The implications of the Labour Party's total compliance with the Community Charge, seem, at last, to be sinking in with some sections of the party's 'Left' - particularly those whose dreams of building havens of 'municipal socialism' have been brought to an abrupt end by the poll tax. Amongst Labour-'Leftists', demoralisation and despondancy is rife. In inner-London, for instance, Hackney Labour Party can't find any candidates willing to stand in 33 out of the 60 council seats to be contested in the May elections.

As the futility of pleading with council bureaucrats becomes ever more apparent, and council workers begin to organise themselves against threats from their employer, the necessity of linking the non-payment campaign in the community directly with the battle being waged by local government - and other - workers, becomes ever clearer.

The strength, resolve and determination of the non-payment campaign in Scotland must be used as inspiration to build the struggle in England and Wales. The coming weeks and months will be critical.



ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

40p

May-July 1990

Issue 19

AN ERUPTION OF CLASS ANGER

THE POLL TAX RIOTS * STRIKING STRATEGIES
MANDELA * ECOLOGY AND CLASS * PRISONS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the folllowing areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, and York.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

Write to: P. O. Box 263, Sheffield S1 3EX.

As regular readers will have seen, we've been forced to increase the cover price of Organise! from 30p to 40p with this issue. This first increase in over two years, has been forced on us by increases in printing and postage costs.

But 40p is still not enough to cover all those costs. If we're to keep the cover price from rising again, we desperately need a regular flow of cash into the Press Fund to help make up the shortfall.

We've added four pages to this issue (at even more expense!) to allow us to include all the material on the Trafalgar Square riot and the poll tax struggle that we needed to.

This issue's appeal has brought in less than £100 - well short of our regular £250 target. Many thanks go to everyone who contributed.

If you can help us reach the next £250 target, please send donations, by June 17, to:

ACF Press Fund, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Hockley, Nottingham.

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF).

Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise! - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree withour A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the August 1990 issue are June 17 for features and reviews, and June 30 for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: Organise!, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Nottingham.

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New ACF pamphlet:

Beating the poll tax

Published in mid-February, with the arrival of poll tax bills in England and Wales just a few weeks away, this new ACF pamphlet outlines the kind of collective class action that can crush the Community Charge.

It examines the strength of poll tax resistance in Scotland so far - and exposes the role of the Labour Party in trying to put down this revolt.

It explains the objectives that lie behind the poll tax, and the cynical way whole sections of the Left have tried to move in on, and suffocate, the growing opposition to it.

This is a brand-new pamphlet, **completely revised and updated.**

Available from: **ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.**

Please send me ..... copies of **Beating the poll tax** at 60p each, I enclose .....
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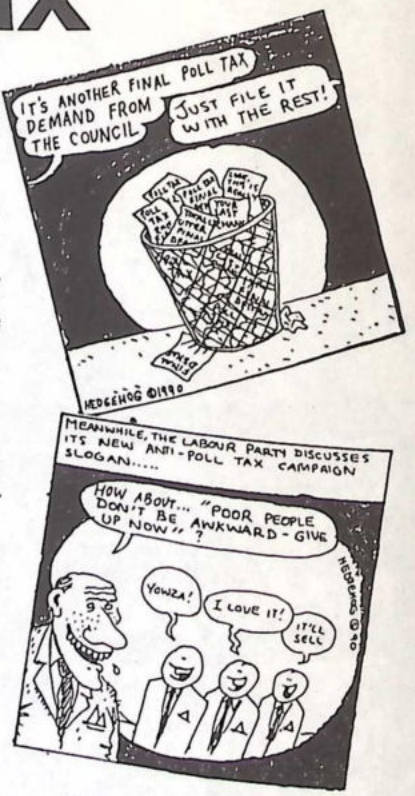


POLL TAX FURY

EVENTS IN MARCH and April saw the unleashing of working class anger towards the hated poll tax. As local councils attempted to set poll tax figures ranging from 149 in ultra-Thatcherite Wandsworth, to a massive 566 in Labour controlled Haringey, thousands of people took to the streets.

Demonstrations tookplace in countless boroughs around the country. Meetings were stormed, and as a result, some were abandoned.

* In Hackney, East London, thousands blocked the main street, and shop windows were smashed in an outburst against the poll tax and the whole rotten system. In Lambeth, thousands massed and fought the police. In Islington, the police brought out their horses against a 2,000 strong crowd. Time and again, Labour councils whined that it wasn't their fault. However, they were still prepared to implement the tax, and denounce those who argued for non-payment.

* Similar scenes were to be repeated outside the inner-city, in places like Southampton, Swindown, Bath, Bristol, Birmingham, Reading, Norwich, Plymouth, Leeds and Liverpool.

* And in the Tory heartlands, there was conspicuous anger against the tax. In Tory-controlled Maidenhead, the town hall was surrounded and bombarded with eggs, stones and pennies. In Walton-on-Thames, in the stockbroker belt, 800 turned out to similar scenes.

* And in Scotland, it was revealed that at least 250,000 people were behind with poll tax payments, after having paid an initial first payment.

* On March 31, massive demonstrations against the tax took place in Glasgow and in London - where working class anger was felt in the heartland of upper class decadence.

Mayhem

Depending on which daily paper you may have read, the 'blame' for such 'mayhem' lies with either the Militant Tendency, the Socialist Workers Party, or mysterious 'anarchist groupings'. The capitalist press love to talk about violence, 'rent-a-mob' and 'outside agitators'. The Labour Party too has talked its fair share of such rubbish. It is typical hypocrisy of such supporters of the capitalist system, who support the use of armed forces to maintain the status quo, to defend 'our Britain', and then cry foul when ordinary people take action to attack the system that attacks them.

Apologies

The Labour Party, which is steeped in the tradition of not only respect for law, but also of implementing the law, will never find itself on the same side as the working class - it can only 'apologise' for us when we take meaningful action.

Militant and the SWP are a hinderance to the fight against the poll tax. Militant has been quick to distance itself from any class violence - after all, they are part of the Labour Party. Neither do they see it as productive in their attempts towards total hi-jacking of the anti-poll tax movement.

The SWP, on the other hand, mainly seeks to sell its papers and boost the membership of their party. Yet after so many twists and turns from the party leadership on what to do about the poll tax, it is unlikely that they know what to think about it all.

As for 'anarchists' - we are involved in such activities no more than the thousands of other ordinary working class people involved in genuine anti-poll tax organisations. The media talks of 'outside agitators' because the bosses cannot bear to admit or believe that ordinary people would dare to act without being manipulated by mysterious trouble makers. Such talk of outsiders is also used to attack the principle of working class solidarity.

The fact the not all those involved in Hackney were from that borough shows a healthy amount of inter-borough solidarity. For the ruling class and their supporters it merely indicates the existence of 'rent-a-mob'.

What the hell do they expect when the government tries to impose something like the poll tax? We are not going to sit around debating its rights and wrongs, lobbying our MPs and waiting till the next Labour government get elected. Fighting the poll tax is all about not paying it, and working class people showing we are not fooled by the State.

We are inspired by such examples of working class resistance and we are optimistic too. But this is not enough. It is important that people against the poll tax not be isolated, and that they be involved in non-payment organisation right now.

In England and Wales, it will not be long before we see the bailiffs assisted by police, attempting to invade our homes for non-payment. We need to build on current support and activity in order to create a concrete response to such future attacks on our numbers from local government and the State.

MANDELA: (not) talking 'bout a revolution

NELSON MANDELA'S RECENT release from prison has been the cause of much celebration and massive media hype. However, for anarchists, his release can bring no such joy - as we see the struggle of the black working class in South Africa restrained and controlled even further by the African National Congress (ANC), in the name of a "negotiated settlement" to end apartheid.

Within hours of his release, Mandela was busy spelling out the nature of his politics: "I hope you will disperse with discipline, and not a single one of you will do anything that will cause other people to say that we can't control our own people" (our emphasis).

Vigilant

Elements of the Left in Britain have not been slow to focus on the reactionary politics which Mandela espouses. They talk of the need to be "vigilant", to "keep a watchful eye" on Mandela. Predictions of a "sell-out" are already resounding.

Yet a brief look at the politics and context of the so-called Freedom Charter and the history of the African National Congress clearly indicates that a "sell-out" cannot be on the cards. For never in the ANC's history has it had a committment to any uncompromising revolutionary politics. The ANC was born of grovelling for a better deal, and pleading with the ruling class in South Africa and abroad, for a lesser version of exploitation and oppression.

The Freedom Charter states that: "the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industries shall be transformed to ownership of the people as a whole". Even this classic nationalisation clause was disowned by Mandela only a year later in the face of criticisms of the Charter being a 'socialist' programme. Mandela explained that what was meant by this was: "...non-European Bourgeois will have the opportunity to own in their own names and rights, mills and factories - and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before"

Capital

So, from private capital to nationalisation and back to private capital in a few short breaths - and not a hint of 'anti-capitalist' politics.

We need look no further than Mandela's address to the Rivonia Trial in 1964 for further evidence: "It (The Freedom Charter) is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state. It provides for nationalisation of mines, banks, industry, because they are owned by one race only" (our emphasis).

It is clear clear that the conflict is not that the ruling class own the wealth and land and means of production. The problem is that the ruling class is white. It follows that the solution is a multi-racial ruling class.

The reasons for Mandela's release are manifold - and nothing to do the "effect (sic) of sanctions", or "international pressure". The containment of the Black working class in South Africa is a major financial and political burden for the ruling class in that country.

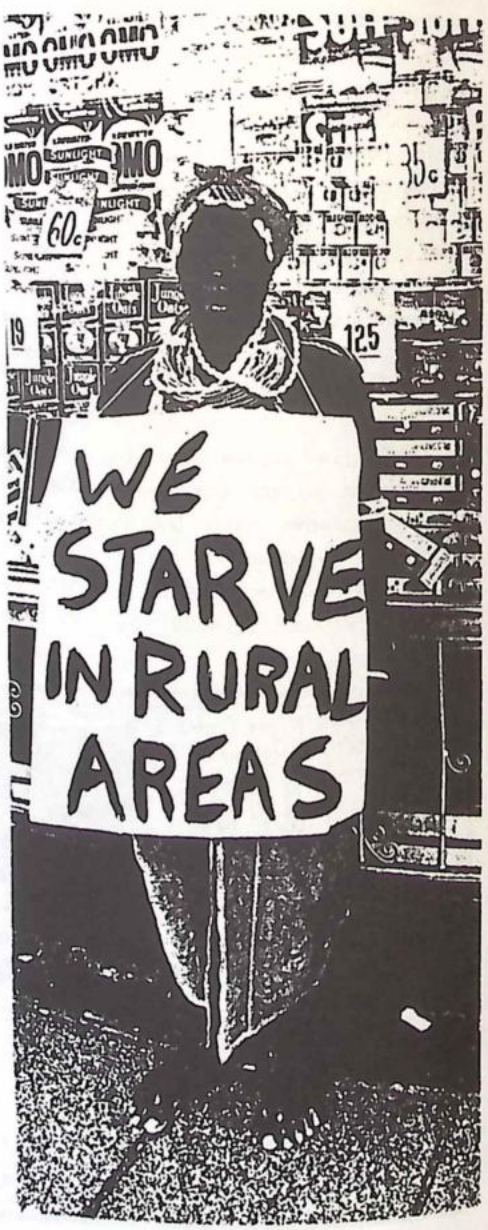
The intensification of the struggle which took place in the mid-eighties was something they could have well done without. Having failed to suppress this recent increase in militancy in the townships and workplaces, the ruling class now realise that another solution is necessary.

Leaders

Whilst granting some political power to black leaders, the white ruling class hopes it can retain hold of economic power and thus stay in control of the 'new' multi-racial capitalist state. But to do this, it needs an organisation which is willing to control the black working class, is willing to do business, and one which will leave alone the white ruling class control over capital.

That organisation is the ANC. The realease of Mandela was simply necessary to provide the environment for this to take place.

The white ruling class and the ANC are not locked in a bitter battle. The ANC is willing to provide a smooth negotiated settlement in return for a larger slice of their slice of the cake. Mandela and the ANC are not fools, they are shrewd politicians, their defence of



the "armed struggle", or outrage at the recent murderous activities of the regime, are simply rhetoric in the negotiating game.

"We want Johannesberg to remain the beautiful and thriving city that it is now. Therefore, we are willing to maintain seperate living until there are enough new employment opportunities and new homes to allow blacks to move into Johannesberg with dignity", says Mandela.

The refusal to renounce the armed struggle by the ANC is a bargaining chip with the Apartheid State. It is a distraction from the backdoor negotiations with the ruling class. Already the ANC has turned their minimum demand of 'one person, one vote' into a maximum demand which Mandela has described as "negotiable".

Bitter

Whilst all this is pretty disheartening, it is important to remember that the many sections of the black working class - especially the young women and men who have grown up in the throes of bitter struggle against the racist State - are far from being ANC lap-dogs. Those involved in the struggles of the eighties have experienced the controlling nature of the ANC. During the 1976-7 and 1980 uprisings the ANC was conspicuously absent. It tried to minimise the importance of the uprisings and workplace militancy, calling them leaderless, chaotic and even infantile. And although the ANC had many requests for weapons from the 'Young Comrades' they only came in a trickle and then only to loyal supporters.

They were usually squandered on elite military actions. They changed their tune during the 1985-7 uprising - realising like the apartheid rulers - that internal revolt was the threat to the white State. The uprising was outside the control of the ANC or any political faction. The townships became no-go areas for the police and military, and collaborators received popular justice.

Street and township committees were set up so that everyone in the insurgent communities directly controlled the struggle. This left the ANC and other groups as leaders without followers.

The ANC do face a difficult task. With a major visual role to play they need to 'appease' all sides. Many working class black South Africans are aware that they have already waited too long, and are not prepared to see the ANC take the struggle from them for the sake of a pot pourri of limited political reforms.

Whilst Mandela calls for a 'pacification' of the struggle in order to facilitate negotiation, black workers have been calling for a strengthening of the struggle, for increased strike action, for mass rent boycotts - for more militancy.

The black working class in South Africa face the continuation of a long and bitter battle, not only against the racist ruling class regime in place at the moment, but also against the ANC - who are willing to do anything to reach their precious 'settlement'.

The Mandela Myth will grow and grow. He is media and capitalist friendly, and will play a key media role in the future of South Africa.

As anarchists, part of our agenda in practising solidarity with the South African working class, must be the smashing of the Myth and in doing so we can expose the failure of nationalism. A change of boss means no change of exploitation - no change at all. Mass revolutionary action from the exploited, the black working class of town and country, the poor and young people, can still foil these plans for normalisation.

A RIOTER'S ACCOUNT

sent anonymously to Organise

EVERYONE WHO FULLY participated in the events of March 31 will agree that they were uplifting.

The sight of tooled up riot police being given a good thrashing, and the sense of liberation from being in control of the streets was almost euphoric.

The police provoked the whole affair. Rather than allow the march to pass off peacefully, they used a combination of arrogance, macho posturing and arbitrary arrests to stir up an already angry crowd of people. That the police were unable to judge the dire consequences of that aggression must mean severe admonitions behind the closed doors of Scotland Yard. They miscalculated and miscalculated badly.

Opportunity

The demonstrators seized the opportunity, and in often very creative ways took command of the situation. The police's tried and tested methods of crowd control were found wanting. That many of the street fighters were young, poor and very determined in their anger proved to be the police's undoing. We would not be pushed around, indeed in huge numbers we surrounded the police in Trafalgar Square and wrought our revenge for years of Thatcherite hostility. Orgreave and Wapping were avenged.

Psychologically, after the first reverses of the riot police, the demonstrators were unstoppable. Perhaps the single most important factor in the police defeat was the psychological one - a combination of anger, determination and lack of fear.

The police use of temporary fences was turned against them. Demonstrators utilised them as barricades or as a means of hemming in the police, allowing them to receive their fair share of missiles. At a later stage, when the events moved to their highly mobile stage, London provided a whole host of builders' materials to construct barricades.

Missiles

Missiles were used with great effect, though the riot police, when facing the crowd, were well protected with helmets and shields. In retreat, however, their backs were totally exposed and vulnerable. In Charing Cross Road, for example, three riot police were obviously terrified at the prospect of missiles from behind, as they passed by a crowd of young demonstrators.

Also, riot police officers' legs are exposed and vulnerable, even when facing a crowd. Their helmets prevented head injuries, which unfortunately was not true for their opponents. Some of the injuries sustained by the crowd came from the demonstrators themselves - as missiles fell short of their targets. Since the uprising was spontaneous, no-one had head protection. This must be considered in the future, though if only a few people are properly protected they will draw the attention of the police. People should throw from nearer the front, to be more accurate. Those present who were used to 'having a go' at the police in areas where they live pointed this out.

The police were taken aback by their inability to cower the crowd with animals - namely horses and dogs. Cavalry charges certainly cleared the large crowds in and around the Square, but only temporarily as the demonstrators re-grouped in between sorties. Also, the mounted police officers were highly vulnerable to missiles - according to one report over 50% of them sustained injuries. They were an easy target. The mobile demonstrators were hardly affected by the mounted police, with a ready supply of missiles and shop doorways to dive into, the cavalry charges were almost laughed off. As for the dogs, they proved totally ineffective. Dog handlers never got near enough to be able to use them.

Of course, with their vans, the police were highly mobile. However, they were also highly vulnerable to ambush - on several occasions police vans were surrounded and stoned. The mobility of the crowds were in the initial stages at least, the learnt effect of the police clearing Trafalgar Square. With the police tied down in pitched battles, the streets were safe to be looted well in advance of the arrival of the riot squads. Later, as the police pursued them, the crowds fanned out to let affluent London know what the poor and oppressed think. The stoning of Stringfellows night-club brought forth squeals of delight as neon lights crashed to the ground. Mobility must be seen as one of the greatest strengths of the day and resulted in a host of lightening attacks and victories.

The use of arson was more questionable. Whilst the firing of the portacabins in the Square was quite spectacular, it did allow the police to use fire engines to move the crowd away from the scene of previous pitched battles. Also, that part of the Square became unsafe as the whole unit could have collapsed on us. The brief burning of the South African Embassy, however, was a delight to behold. It is interesting to note that the windows hide a false facade. The whole Embassy is constructed like a fort. As regards the upturning and burning of cars, they did provide the danger of explosions, and several small family cars were gutted - which is surely to be criticised. But our true enemies - the rich - felt our fury to its fullest.

Future

In the future, we can be sure, the police will used alternative methods if they start to take heavy casualties. One option would be to use CS gas - but this is indiscriminate and would affect wealthy tourists who swarm around the West End. Plastic bullets may be used next time, but the political costs here are high and their use - like CS gas - marks a display of defeat.

People who watched the riot on TV, or from the safety of the far side of Trafalgar Sqaure (unable to participate for whatever reason) have said the police got what they deserved. Such events give our class confidence, and we learn how to co-operate together and effectively take on the State.

We don't need anyone to organise us, anyone who had tried to take over would have been told to fuck off. We laugh when they try to point to ring leaders, just like we laugh at people who try to take over anti-poll tax campaigns.

The working class is on the march again. We will learn the lessons of battles in the past and defeat the poll tax and defeat the ruling class.

ECOLOGY AND CLASS

MANY PEOPLE ARE now aware of the massive worldwide problem of environmental pollution and destruction.

Rainforests such as Amazonia (home to native peoples and thousands of unique animal and plant species, and an important source of oxygen and absorber of carbon dioxide) are being decimated. Large areas of land are being turned into desert. There is an increasing number of 'natural' disasters such as droughts, floods and earthquakes affecting ever more people. Pollution is causing dangerous climatic changes such as the global warming from the Greenhouse Effect.

Acid rain, poisoning of the sea and drinking water, increasing cancers from industrial radiation, the list is endless. But what are the causes and solutions, and what is the relationship of ecology to the class stuggle?

Ecology is science of living things and their relationship to the environment in which they live. There are three central ecological principles:

(1) All life on Earth is interdependent.

For example plants provide the air we breathe and food we eat (directly, or indirectly as meat from other animals who eat plants). Our shit and dead bodies enrich the soil that plants grow in.

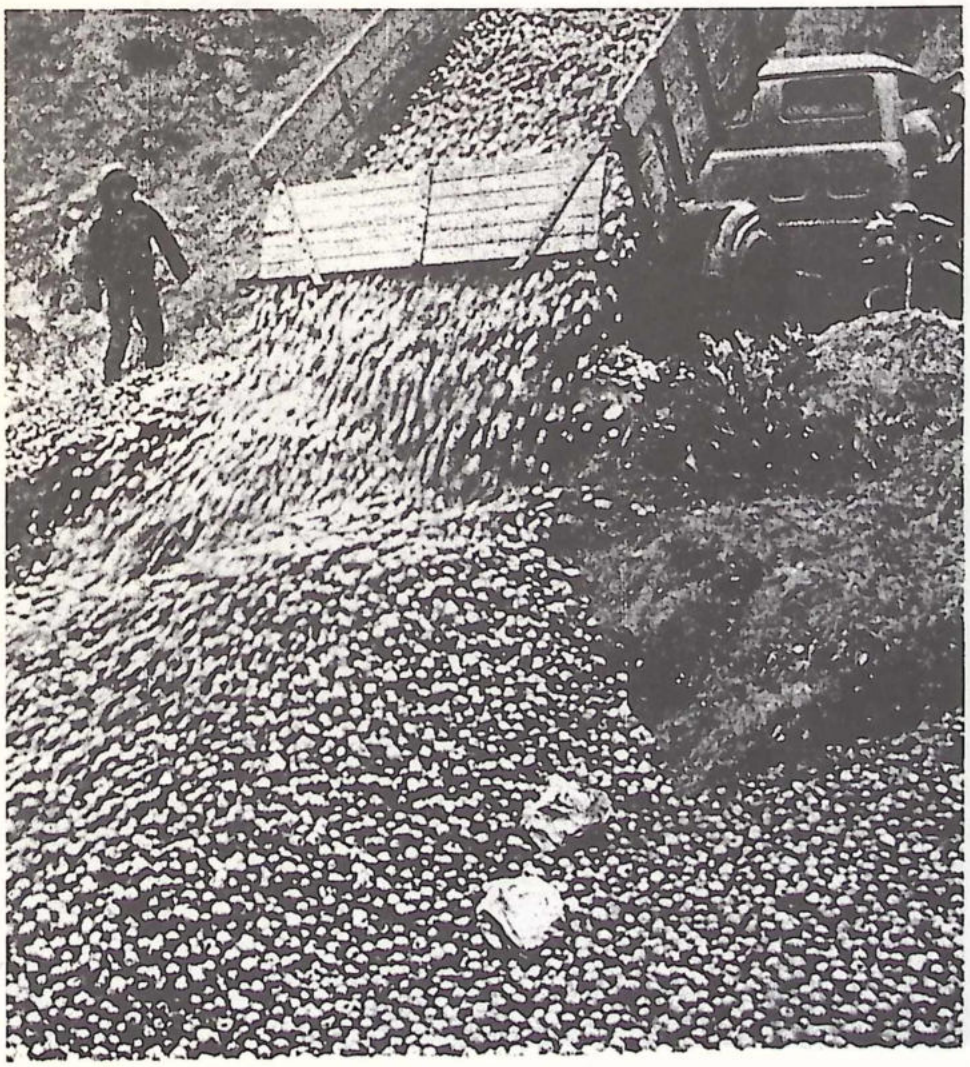
(2) Plants and animals naturally achieve balance with each other through dynamic equilibrium.

For example when there is a big increase in the population of field mice (upsetting the balance between species), it is followed by an increase in the population of creatures that eat them, such as owls and foxes, until a new balance is achieved.

(3) Unity in diversity.

The more species there are in a natural environment, the more stable it is. Conversely the less species there are, the more unstable it is.

All of these principles have been radically undermined by the environmental crisis.



People are acting in many different ways to try and green society - as consumers, dissident shareholders, in mainstream/green parties, in green pressure groups. Green ideas are trendy and topical: even companies and governments are getting in on the act. What is the effect of all this talk and action?

Governments of the industrialised countries signed a treaty in 1987, the Montreal Protocol, agreeing to halve the production of CFC's (Chloro-Fluoro-Carbons which damage the ozone layer, causing global warming) by the year 2000. It's been estimated however that a reduction of 85% is needed to enable the ozone layer to repair itself. Acid Rain is being similarly 'tackled' - too little, too slowly and never tackling the root cause.

Lead free petrol supposedly makes cars OK, but they are still major polluters and profoundly anti-social (killing 6000 people a year in Britain and injuring 40,000). Thatcher's belated conversion to enviromentalism (for example her condemnation of the Greenhouse Effect resulting from fossil fuels) is little more than a subterfuge for the expansion of Nuclear Power which lessens the reliance on coal, undesirable because of the power and militancy of the miners.

Protocol

Companies are making an increasing number and ranges of 'environmentally-friendly' and 'healthy' products such as bleaches and detergents, unadulterated food. These products are invariably more expensive (and so can only be afforded by the better off) and they are also often the 'acceptable face' of big companies who continue to make the same old junk in large quantities. Big firms such as Shell spend millions of pounds on advertising and PR, letting us know how green they are - reclaiming the land after they've used it, putting their pipelines underground, and giving money to green projects, yet they continue (with governments) to be the environmental terrorists.

Consumerism (alienated buying-to-be-happy) is part of the problem. Capitalism wants us to spend all of our 'free' time (when we're not working-to-live or busy with domestic drudgery)

buying 'leisure'. Although green products are preferable they are not the answer: they're an individual solution to a social problem - who controls what is produced and how. As individuals the majority of us - the working class - have no control over our lives. We certainly don't exercise any social say or control through what we do or don't buy (or as dissident shareholders). Organised consumer boycotts linked to workers action can have a significant effect, however.

Rural

The green policies and promises of the mainstream political parties are so much populist window-dressing. Green Parties are superficially more attractive. They have some radical policies such as decentralism, federalism and opposition to leaders. But if they achieve power, they will (like the mainstream parties or Bolsheviks) be running the state, the rule of the few which is the root of the problem. They will also - inevitably - be corrupted by power as illustrated by the German Green Party: in power at State level they supported nuclear power.

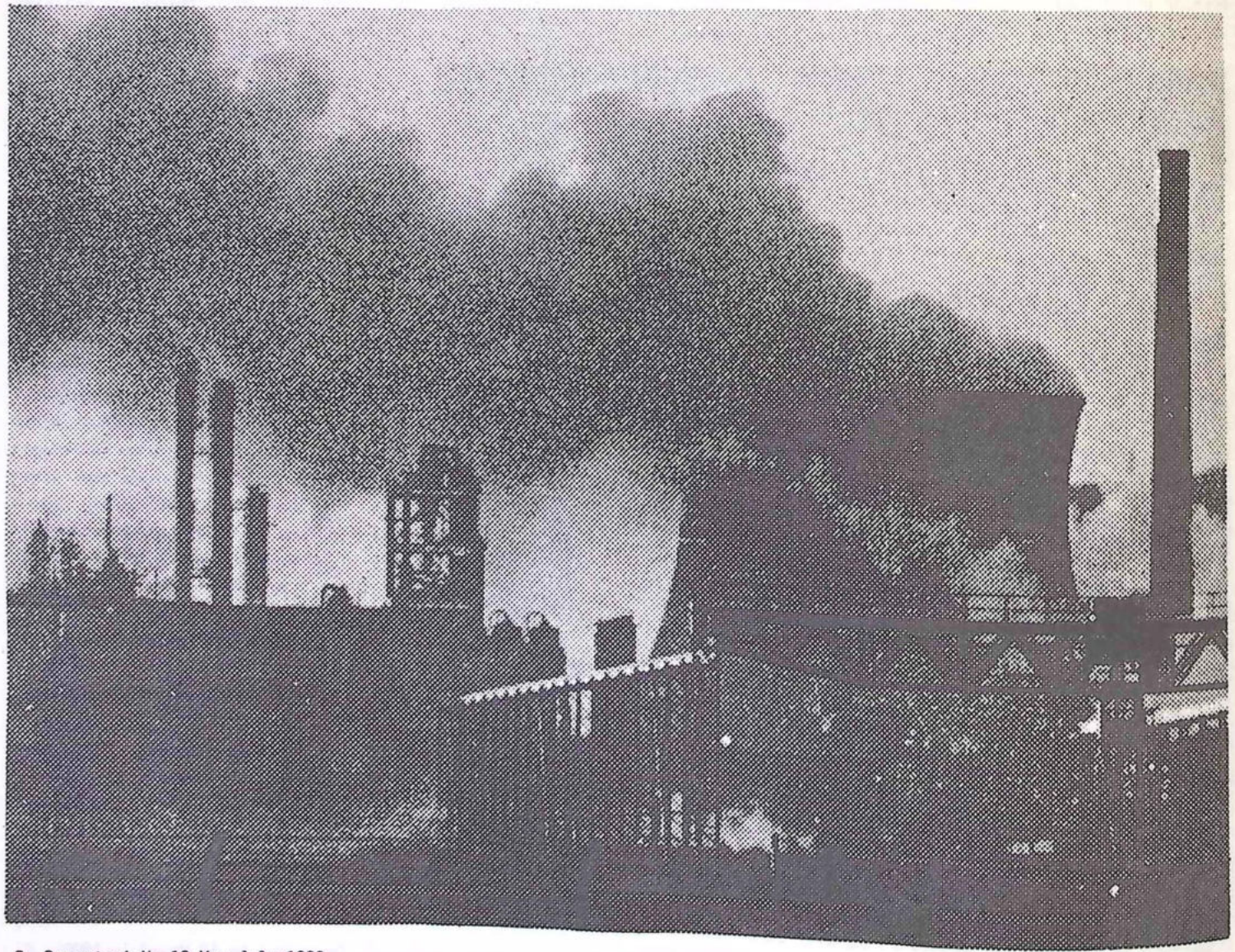
One of their central rules was that no-one could be a spokesperson for more than two years, yet this was vehemently opposed by the first generation of non-leaders such as Petra Kelly when their time was up. In Britain the Green Party (though still in opposition) has refused to support mass non-payment of the poll tax because it won't support illegal action. The 'radical' Greater London Council of Ken Livingstone showed the same lessons: you cannot impose radical policies and people power from above: people must collectively take power for themselves, outside of and against political parties.

Green pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace International do some good practical work (particularly the local groups) but are flawed by their 'apolitical' stance (which means that they accept the state and capitalism) and their single issue politics.

Social problems do not exist as single issues, so they can't be tackled as such. Greenpeace's initial anti-fur-trapping campaign brought them into conflict with Native Peoples because they failed to distinguish between subsistance activity and the big business trapping of the major fur companies. For years CND refused to oppose nuclear power, even though it is inextricably linked to nuclear weapons.

Some green activists lack of class analysis has led them to the misantropic conclusion that people in general are (equally) responsible for the ecological crisis. This means that the Earth would be better off without people and has led (for example) to the American direct action group 'Earth First' stating that Aids is a good thing because it kills off so many people, and to racist outbursts about the detrimental effects of Third World 'overpopulation'.

What is striking about pollution and environmental destruction is the



scale of it, and the fact that most of results from routine, daily practice rather than 'accidents' or 'disasters' such as Bhopal, Soveso, Chernobyl or the Exxon Valdez Alaskan oil spill.

To take the example of agriculture. In the 'developed' world, it is mostly large-scale industrialised agribusiness. The emphasis is on growing single crops in huge fields - monoculture - an unstable ecosystem. The crops are much more vulnerable to pests, necessitating chemical pesticides. Chemical fertilisers are used to obtain (short term) high yields, in the long term these deplete the soil of nutrients and yields fall. Pesticides kill both pests and the creatures that prey on them, and poison food and drinking water.

Factory farming - concentration camps for animals - is morally indefensible and produces unhealthy meat, eggs and milk. There is massive, government-subsidised over-production leading to examples such as the famous butter mountains and wine lakes. This food is fed back to animals or destroyed - more economic than selling it cheaply or giving it to people who need it. Farmers are also paid to keep good land fallow.

Poorest

In Africa and Asia the rural population live on the poorest land. They are forced to grow cash crops for export, although their primary need is to feed themselves: 15 million children die every year from malnutrition. In Brazil the IMF (International Monetary Fund) is insisting that the huge $120 billion debt is paid by reducing imports and maximising exports. This has inevitably led to the worsened rape of Amazonia through increasing the output of primary products such as minerals, meat, coffee, cocoa and hardwoods.

Living on the worst land, these growing populations overcultivate, deforest and overuse it, making themselves more prone to 'natural' disasters such as floods and droughts. This land is also the most dangerous: the poor live in shanty towns on flood-prone river basins or foreshores, or in huts of heavy mud brick on steep hills.

Mass pollution and environmental destruction is the inevitable consequence of a system based on dominating the rest of nature (and therefore exploiting and destroying it). This domination has it's roots in the domination of people - class society, where power and wealth is in the hands of a few, the ruling class, who oppress and exploit the working class majority, and the related oppressions of racism and sexism. Production is for profit not need. It is the ruling class who decide what is produced and how - peasants don't choose to live on the worst land, or grow cash crops, individual consumers can't stop pollution through buying, boycotting or voting.

Technology

It is important to examine technology (the machines and tools used by society and the relations between them implied by their use). Existing technology is rarely neutral - it has been developed under and by capitalism for profit (exploitation) and social-economic control. It is therefore not just a question of control - a nuclear power station controlled by the workers and community would still be unhealthy and oppressive. VDUs monitor whether and how fast their operators are working, production lines force people to do boring repetitive tasks at an inhuman pace (that of machines).

The ruling class is constantly modifying technology developing new machines, tools and techniques in response to working class struggles: containerisation (enabling goods to be equally transferable between ship, rail and road) was developed in response to the power and organisation of the dockers.

Technologies which are potentially more liberating are suppressed. Sucessive British governments have put massive funds into nuclear power, tiny ammounts into research and development of renewable energy resources such as wind, solar, tidal and geothermal energy. This paltry funding has been deliberately chopped about so that research into each renewable energy never progressed too far.

Large scale industry neccesitates large scale centralised energy production from fossil fuels (Coal, Oil and Gas) and nuclear power, with the consequent waste, acid rain, radiation and global warming. Renewable energy could equally be used.

We need to develop a technology which extends human capabilities, can be controlled by the community and is friendly to the environment as part of the struggle for a free anarchist-communist society. A genuine alternative technology can only be developed on a significant scale in a new society.

There are a number of examples of workers taking ecological action. In the 1970s a number of groups of Australian workers instituted Green Bans, through which they boycotted ecologically destructive projects. Builders, Seafarers, Transport and Railworkers, and Dockers boycotted all work connected with the nuclear industry, the Franklin River project - flooding the Tasmanian National Park (including Aboriginal land) for a large Hydro-electric project: a victory. Similarly workers blacked Amax's attempts to drill and mine for oil and diamonds and other minerals on aboriginal land at Noonkanbah. They also actively supported the militant occupation of the site by aboriginal people.

In Britain the boycott of dumping Nuclear Waste at sea by rank and file seafarers forced the government to abandon the policy in the 1980s.

In Brazil, rubber tappers forged an alliance with native peoples and environmentalists to oppose massive deforestation of the Amazon rainforest by big landowners and business interests. Their success led to the murder of union activist Chico Mendes by hired assasins in December 1988, but the struggle continues.

Mass direct action by communities (occupations, sabotage and pitched battles with police) has prevented Nuclear power stations and reprocessing facilities being built at Plogoff in France, and Whyll and Wackendorff in Germany. In Britain communities mobilised in 1987 to end government plans to dump nuclear waste at 4 sites. In Thailand several years ago. 100,000 people rioted to destroy a 70m steel factory.

Class

Ecological issues and class struggle are inextricably linked. The struggle for a green society where people live in harmony with the rest of nature therefore goes hand in hand with the struggle for a society free from human domination. Capitalism cannot be reformed - it is built on the domination of nature, and of people.

We need to take direct control of every aspect of our lives through social revolution: collectively seizing control of the land, workplaces and streets, and sharing decisions, work and wealth - deciding what is produced and how, dissolving the divisions between and home, work and play, people and the rest of nature.

THE POLL TAX:
The Peasants Revolt

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, the Labour Party, the media and the All Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation alike, have declared anarchists to be 'public enemy number one' after the demonstration in London against the poll tax on March 31.

According to them, anarchists in general - but specifically groups like Class War, the Anarchist Communist Federation and the Direct Action Movement - were behind the Trafalgar Square riot and the subsequent assaults on the West End.

According to us, anarchism in Britain has never had it so good. The influence that our ideas have had in the working class has always been misrepresented by the State and the 'State-in-waiting' (the Left-wing parties). The events in Trafalgar Square have caused much speculation about who we are, what we believe, and what we do.

We have worked consistently over the years to introduce our ideas (politics and working practise) into the class struggle in all its forms. Increasingly, we have gained respect for the work we do around various aspects of that struggle, and our ideas have been taken up and put into practise. We support working class resistance to the State whenever we see it.

Over the last decade in particular class struggle anarchist organisations have grown in strength and influence. We are currently seeing a massive upsurge in working class resistance to the State, focused largely around refusal to cooperate with the poll tax. The effectiveness with which working class people take up anarchist forms of organisation is no accident. When resistance to a government necessitates also taking on the 'reformist' and 'revolutionary' Left - as well as the Trades Union movement, the Police and the media - then the time is right for Anarchy!

After the Trafalgar Square riot, given the exciting scale of resistance to the poll tax, and the role that anarchists play (and are claimed to play), the Anarchist Communist Federation would like to State our case on various issues thrown up for us by the current attention we are receiving.

"VIOLENCE AND LOOTING IS NOT THE WAY TO MAKE THE CASE AGAINST THE POLL TAX"

People say that taking on the police and the ruling class has nothing to do with the poll tax. They either believe that the rest of capitalism isn't too bad, but that the poll tax is unfair, or they believe the working class needs leading a stage at a time, through the various battles (NHS, Wapping etc) that we face before their own party takes over.

The truth is that class violence is always effective in getting results, and the working class at its most angry will attack its ultimate oppressor - not the just poll tax, not just the Tories, not just the Labour leadership, but the whole ruling class and those who support it.

The Left has always been terrified of class violence, that is why it seeks to control or crush it. Whenever the working class is at its strongest they tell us to pressurise our 'elected leaders', bring change through the ballot box or restrict our activities to the workplace. This is because they are afraid of class action they cannot control. They try to dismiss class violence as a symptom of Thatcherism, a sign of human unhappiness, but deny it is a part of the real battle against the ruling class, that will eventually sweep them away too. The 'State-in-waiting' cannot allow the working class to dismiss all authority, because that means them too.

Why shouldn't we steal from the rich! They steal from us all the time by forcing us into wage-slavery and making huge profits out of our work. Anarchists have no moral qualms about trashing or stealing the 'property' of people who own hundreds of times more than what they need and what we have.

Why is violence alright in the Eastern Bloc, in South Africa, in Nicaragua, but not here? Why was it alright for Watt Tyler and the peasants in the 1300s to kill officers enforcing the poll tax, but not for us? Is it because things here are 'not as bad'? Because we have a 'democracy' as a final resort instead? Anarchists treat bourgeois-democracy with scorn. Why should the working class wait for things to get worse, before the Left allow us to fight?

Violence is inevitable in a situation of class conflict - it is also necessary to bring about ultimate change.

At our most angry, those who can will fight, and those who can't will perform the more important role of enabling and supporting those who do.

Battles like Trafalgar Square increase the confidence of the class, and they also teach us to organise ourselves collectively and support each other so it is more frightening for the ruling class than it is for us in times of class conflict.

Violence and looting makes the case against the poll tax, the case for class anger and against poverty, very well indeed. The working class is on the march aganist the rich, and the Left struggle to keep up.

"ANARCHISTS ORGANISED THE VIOLENCE"

No we didn't - and we wouldn't take the credit. Such patronising suggestions that riots on demonstrations, picket lines and on housing eStates are organised by 'outside agitators' are simply not true.

Certainly plenty of Trotskyists would like to be accepted by the working

class as leaders, but people always tell them to fuck off and sell their papers somewhere else.

We sometimes wonder if the State believes its own lies, that 'Rent-a-Mob' comes down to 'organise the violence'. The truth is that the ruling class want people to see the 'parliamentary road' as the way to change, and see people opposing that as 'extremists' imposing their views on 'decent people'.

Anarchists throughout the world have been, and are, active in opposing all dictatorships whether Fascist, Bolshevik, Monarchist or Bourgeois-democratic. But in any situation, not least over Trafalgar Square (or the fight against the poll tax in general) if we tried to impose any kind of leadership or manipulate people like the Left does, we would be told to fuck off, and quite rightly so.

The media can produce all the pictures they want of people 'coordinating the violence', but the truth is that people can and do organise mutually and more cleverly that that. Anyone who has been involved in class violence will know how it works, and how unwelcome any 'stewarding' or self-appointed leadership is.

Rioting is only one form of class anger - generally speaking only the young and able bodied without children to look after get involved. This does not negate the legitimacy of the violence - as communities throughout the world fighting the State know. The State organises the working class to fight <u>for it</u> in war time, and fools or forces it into supporting the war effort. When the working class fights the State, men and women united by class, not by colour or nationality, are involved and supported by the rest of the class because <u>they choose to.</u>

Unlike many marches, the majority of people who were on the London demo, and involved in fighting back against the police, were not in political parties, or apologists for Labourism. They were people affected by the poll tax. Many among them, anarchists too, were well used to fighting the police. The joy of this occasion was that we were hitting the State where it hurts - wealthy areas. They aren't just outraged becuase Militant didn't steward us well enough and we routed the police, but because we interupted the rich at play!

"VIOLENCE AND 'ANARCHY' WILL PUT ORDINARY PEOPLE OFF FIGHTING THE POLL TAX"

The truth is that working class people are sick and tired of being told to wait for a Labour government to get rid of the poll tax, or wait for the Tories to give in. They are glad to see the pressure increased and the pace livened up a bit.

This is why the strength of non-payment is so great. In Scotland, the poll tax has been resisted for over a year now - non-payment is a success! As it enters its second year, people's confidence has increased by seeing the English and Welsh working class so angry.

Campaigns have grown - not shrunk - since the start of April. People don't believe the State lies about the 'violent minority', they have no faith in the State and are are glad to see it opposed, as demonstrated by the massive anti-poll movement.

Many working class people in England thought the anti-poll tax campaign was full of moralist, middle class Lefties - like CND or Anti-Apartheid. Now they will get involved because they see it not as a 'protest' campaign, but one of direct action and resistence.

What certainly will put people off is Leftist politics dominating campaigns, and the refusal or reluctance by many Left groups to support those involved in violence against the State. What horrifies them further is self-appointed leaders of campaigns threatening to shop people 'involved' to the police. But what else would you expect from the enemies of the working class?

"THE POLICE STARTED THE VIOLENCE - BUT PEOPLE SHOULDN'T HAVE CARRIED IT ON"

Why do people always have to use the notion of police brutality as an excuse for attacking them? Of course they are violent and push us around - that's what they are there for! Anarchists are never afraid to advocate people, en masse, 'having a go' when there is any chance of getting away with it. It's important that this happens.

The middle class Left is afraid of class violence, they always say 'the police started it', 'the police didn't let me have my rights in custody', etc. They always present working class people as victims of police brutality.

When do the working class get the credit for fighting back? Only when we credit ourselves! Anarchists aim to show the police as vulnerable, so that people know they can be defeated.

Sure, the police very often provoke the actual violence in a situation of mounting class anger (as at Trafalgar Square), but going on about it implies that the class isn't angry enough to take on the State unless the State decides where, when and how it will happen, and this simply isn't the case.

"ANARCHISTS AND THE LEFT SHOULD UNITE AGAINST THE POLL TAX"

The Left often accuses us of being sectarian because we aim to expose the destructive role they play in struggles. We do this to stop them disempowering the class, so that struggles like the one against the poll tax stand a better chance of succeeding.

The Left are always on about uniting, but they engage in working class struggles for political gains to their own organisations, and so always end up in-fighting over irrelevant issues to 'prove' their point.

Anarchists are not part of the Left. We oppose cross class collaboration, so-called 'revolutionary' vanguards and those who pretend we can 'vote away' the ruling class. We are the enemies of <u>any</u> State leadership. Like most of the rest of the working class, we have a healthy mistrust of party politics.

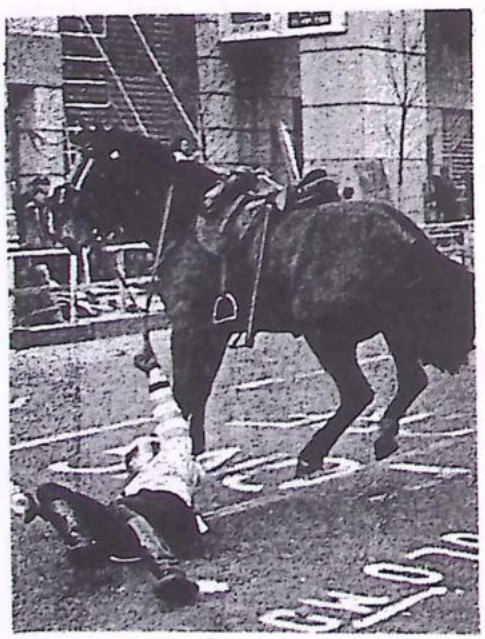
The majority of people fighting the poll tax are ordinary people. The Left

try to make meetings and anti-poll tax activity as boring and bureaucratic as they can in order to control them, and people often feel alienated by this process and don't get involved in organising themselves, however committed to non-payment they may be.

Leftist forms of organisation are elitist and empire building, which does nothing to make people enthused or inspired about coming out of their homes to organise with others of their class. The most exciting and effective actions nationwide against the tax, have not been inspired by Left politics. The very notion of non-payment as the major strategy, as opposed to industrial disruption, is one that comes from a distinctly non-Leftists tradition of rent strikes, and is one that the Left tail ended when it was clear how widespread it was becoming.

The Trafalgar Square riot was the most memorable battle with the police since the Miner's Strike, the '81 riots and the Wapping dispute. On all occasions the class were not afraid to take up the challenge. On all these occasions the Left were nowhere to be seen - except selling papers. As organisations, they were entirely irrelevant. It was a good job there were so many of their placards at the Trafalgar Square rally, however. For the first half hour there was nothing else to throw!

The Left are the enemies of autonomous working class organisation and action. Militant in particular, hold the theory that the 'disaffected' working class, the 'lumpen proletariat' (the homeless, criminals, uneducated and the most poverty stricken) are quite likely to 'flare up' occasionally. They believe this 'backward layer' must be contained until they can control it. They will come out with many arguments against anarchism, but what it comes down to is the fact that our ideology recognises the revolutionary impulse of the <u>whole</u> class. We expose Militant's fear that this 'layer' will seize the day and realize the irrelevance of Militant, the Labour Party and the whole lot of them.



The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) are making their own bid for leadership of the struggle, only less cleverly than Militant as they failed to recognise the capital they could make at the start. Along with most of the Left, their strategy is to get working class people to call on the TUC, Labour Party councillors etc to 'lead the fight'. They know that these people will 'let the class down', and the need for a better leadership - themselves - will be 'proved'. This tactic diverts energy away from the real fight against the poll tax, and dissillusions and even further disempowers working class people who are fighting back for themselves. This is why we oppose and expose it whenever we can.

At the end of the day, the class will reject 'their' leadership. One effect of community based anti-poll tax campaigns is to bring this time closer, as the tax is defeated.

"WHO ARE ANARCHISTS AND WHAT IS THEIR ROLE IN THE ANTI-POLL TAX STRUGGLE?"

The kind of anarchism with a tradition of organisation as part of the international working class - the kind the ACF advocates - is 'class struggle anarchism'. We oppose 'life-stylist' anarchism, where people think they can change society by 'dropping out', like the hippies in the '60s, and create a cultural alternative without a revolution.

Class struggle anarchists believe in organisation and close coordination in the working class. We are in revolutionary organisations like the ACF and Class War, although much specifically revolutionary activity goes on outside these groups. The Direct Action Movement, a 'syndicalist' anarchist organisation, are also class struggle anarchists, but we have some differences with them over the effectiveness of setting up alternative trades unions, which is their aim.

What really worries the State and the media is that you can't tell a class struggle anarchist from any other working class person.

We exist to expose the State and inspire the struggle against it. We see it as counter-productive to try to 'lead' this struggle, but we try to influence it with our ideas. Similarly, we don't impose a leadership on our movement. If the Left and the media find this confusing, that's their problem. Our methods come from historical experience in struggle. The State does not and cannot understand how we organise, because it can't lock up our leaders (as we have none).

Our role in the struggle against the poll tax is to encourage activity that takes its strength from the direct involvement of working class individuals, in the communities where we live, and the places where we work. It is hard to inspire people with the confidence to fight the State, as capitalism teaches us to leave 'change' up to other people. But any struggle - not least where a strategy like non-payment is involved - needs the direct input and mutual solidarity of the people concerned.

The ACF totally supports such confrontations with the State as Trafalgar Square - as they give the working class the confidence and skills needed to overthrow the ruling class. They teach us to show our anger and enjoy our class strength. Although life under capitalism is a bastard, we can change if we refuse to let them intimidate us.

What the State, the Left and the media choose to ignore, is that anarchists don't seek the job of 'co-ordinating' or 'organising' such action. We recognise the responsibility of the working class <u>as a whole</u> to respond to capitalism . Unlike Trotskyists and other Leftists, we don't think it needs us to do it for them, as though we were the conscious brain of a class too stupid to use its strength without leadership.

It is capitalism that isolates us, and makes it hard for us to act together. Anarchist communism is about showing people their collective class strength, towards overthrowing <u>all</u> rulers and <u>all</u> forms of capitalism, and organising instead for mutual benefit.

Our role is to encourage dissatisfaction and resistance wherever it raises its head, and to inspire other working class people with self confidence (through things like fighting the poll tax), and the desire for revolutionary change.

Polish anarchists begin to organise

THE POLISH ANARCHIST Federation (AFP) was set up on November 11 1989. It consists of at least 19 local groups, in 13 towns - which, for a newly emerged movement, is a considerable success. Nearly all these groups publish magazines or papers.

On January 12, anarchists shouting 'Down with capitalism', 'We don't want price rises' and 'Turn Kuron into soup' (Kuron - a former 'dissident' - now Minister for Labour in the new Polish government) interrupted a session of the Senate (Polish Parliament) in Warsaw for fifteen minutes.

The AFP is widely regarded as the main revolutionary force opposed to both the 'Communist' bureaucrats and the Solidarity advocates of austerity measures.

Evidence for this can be found in the following interview with Josef Pinior: a leading member of the Polish Socialist Party-Democratic Revolution (PSP-DR) - which has been translated from a French journal and re-edited.

How do you explain the evolution of Solidarity?

I don't think it is possible to talk about the evolution of Solidarity as if it were a single unit, united by a single programme. On the contrary, Solidarity is today deeply divided.

On one side, we have a new bureaucratic set-up, around Lech Walesa, which is trying to turn Solidarity into a classic reformist union.

On the other hand, there is the Solidarity made up of the rank and file, trying to address the problems that the majority of Polish society is facing: the questions posed by the struggle against 'pauperisation', etc.

If the leadership of Solidarity continues to oppose the struggles being led by the rank and file - strikes and wage-demands - sooner or later there will be open conflict between the two groups.

Do you think a revolutionary alternative to Solidarity will emerge in Poland?

I have no doubt that such an alternative is likely to appear. Why? The system which reigns throughout the Bloc cannot continue. Gorbachev knows this perfectly well and this system is now confronted with a turning-point.

The leaders of the emerging 'opposition' movements dream of a 'capitalism with a human face'. You know of the proposals of the International Monetary Fund for Poland: as throughout the world, we are to 'tighten our belts' to meet the costs of economic reform. I am certain that the majority of workers, of society, will not accept pauperisation. We cannot allow ourselves to. The Poles are ready to fight.

You cannot solve the crisis by accentuating social differences. The people that economic reform will throw onto the street are going to struggle. They will defend themselves with strikes and demonstrations, and this resistance will come from all the rank and file structures of Solidarity.

Rank-and-File Solidarity, is the real workers' movement, it's also getting involved in all the opposition groups that are being created at the moment. I think that in these strikes, in these wage struggles, a revolutionary consciousness will be born, and with it a search for an alternative way to organise society, destroying once and for all, all vestiges of Stalinism.

The ideas of workers' control over production, and the creation of grass-roots democracy will flourish. This new socialist alternative, because it will be confronted by the experiences of Stalinism, will naturally have anarchist elements within it. It will necessarily be an alternative based on self-management.

Can you give a brief sketch of the present Polish opposition and its different tendencies?

Starting off with Rank and File Solidarity, the factory committees, where a process of re-evaluation is going on, a new consciousness can be seen in the new structures that are directly political and in new thought that is explicitly left-wing.

It is the same for the anarchist groupings which have been organised, and which are becoming an important element on the Polish political landscape. There is finally the effect that this radicalism has caused on Fighting Solidarity, which has not yet arrived at a clear political position. This is a group which separated itself from Solidarity, mixing very different elements in its programme, including self-management and 'social solidarity', with the free market and parliamentary democracy.

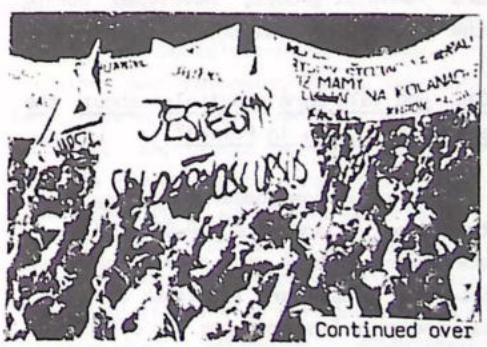
It seems that we are seeing in the last few years a questioning of traditional religious and nationalist ideas held by the Polish workers' movement and by the young. What can you tell us about the emergence of these anti-authoritarian currents?

Young people are a very important element in the Polish political scene. Growing up under the State of Emergency, they've experienced tear gas and tanks on the streets. And now they see no future for themselves. They cannot find housing or well-paid work - they have no future other than hunger.

This generation is clearly opposed to the leadership of Solidarity as well as to the Church, and - of course - to the government itself. It realises that all these forces share the aim of 're-modelling' young people, to help maintain the system of exploitation and domination.

This spontaneous rejection led to an influx of young people into the new opposition groups. The PSP-DR, the anarchist groups of Fighting Solidarity are 80-90% made up of people under 30. While the Church and its following exercised an enormous influence on the young generation before August 1980, the young opposition is completely made up of those outside and the Church and sometimes actively opposed to it.

The first signs of anti-clericalism are appearing - and will develop. This



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Creating a Hungarian

AFTER POLAND, A second anarchist movement has developed in Eastern Europe: in Hungary.

In 1986, the idea of creating anarchist groups was raised during a meeting. But, if the interest in anarchist ideas was already important, there was - as yet - no feeling for the need to organise.

At this time, some anarchist ideas were being expressed through the underground paper Egtajak Kozoth ('Between the Cardinal Points'). In 1988, twenty people met in Budapest, to form an anarchist group, calling it Autonomia. Three other groups were formed: Eger, Nyiregyhaza, and Szekeskhervar.

Autonomia holds weekly meetings, devoted to both theory and practice. It takes an active part within the Hungarian opposition. Several of its members were among founders of Hungarian Solidarity (Munkasszolidaritas - 'Workers' Solidarity'). It participated in the giant demo of March 15 1989, when between 90,000 and 100,000 people turned out in Budapest.

It gave full support to the struggle against the hydro-electric dams on the Danube.

What hopes for the movement? A lot of time has passed since the workers' councils of 1919 and 1956. In reaction to the totalitarian system there is often a systematic rejection of all structures that are too rigid and hierarchical. This attitude can sometimes become complete apoliticism, or even a kind of nihilism.

Nevertheless, the development of the movement points to the clear revival of anarchism in Eastern Europe.

Hungary - Background.

AT THE END of the 1970s, the 'goulash socialism' of Hungary began to run out of goulash. It was the end of the 'Hungarian economic miracle'.

During the next ten years, the development of the struggle seemed to follow the development of inflation. And now, for over a year, the situation has accelerated, the economy has dived, tension has mounted and the rulers are vacillating.

On March 15 1988, 15,000 people (compared with 1,000 in 1985) marched to commemorate the 1848 uprising, and - by association - that of 1956 against the 'Communist' Government. People coming out onto the streets began to realise their power, and to rid themselves of a feeling of isolation. The following year, between 90,000 and 100,000 demonstrated. The 'Communist' Party, in the face of this mass movement, has been compelled to grant reforms and to destroy its own political monopoly.

Many political groups have emerged. A fortnight after the 1988 demo, the Fidesz (Young Democrats) was formed - an important organisation, uniting different political tendencies of the young opposition.

In the Autumn, the SzDsz was born fron the Network of Independent Initiatives. At its origin, it was a loose co-ordination designed to encourage the circulation of information between the many 'informal initiatives'. Now, it was felt that a more structured organisation was necessary. The SzDsz (Federation of Independent Democrats) united the great majority of well-known personalities of the intelligensia. It is a fertile forum for ideas, but its influence is limited to 3,000 people amongst the intelligensia, nearly all in Budapest.

Since 1987, a 'Counter-Parliament' organised by dissidents has existed in Budapest. This mutated in Autumn 1988 into a forum laregly dominated by right-wingers. Within it there are three tendencies - liberal, conservative and popularist. This Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) groups 15,000 people together, and is more influential that the SzDsz with its solid network of local committees.

Parties

The Party of Smallholders has also re-formed. Before the 'Communist' take-over, this group was important in a Hungary that was essentially rural. But now with massive industrialisation, this Party has no future, unless it breaks with its exclusively peasant role.

Other groups that have emerged include the Hungarian Party of Independence (extreme-right wing) who support Christian and Nationalist values. There is also a Nazi Party - the Hungarian National-Socialist Party - led by some old-timers of Hungarian fascism, who control a hundred skinheads who regularly attack Jews and Gypsies. They

Continued from page 13

phenomenon was very visible in the campaign against the Bill banning abortion, which the Church has tried to get through Parliament. A left-alternative, composed of the PSP-DR, anarchist groups and feminist groups, developed during the struggle against the Bill.

Can you talk more precisely about the anarchist groups in Poland?

These groups appeared in many towns throughout Poland. The PSP-DR collaborates very closely with them. The most important groups are in Gdansk and Warsaw where we let them use our office.

Here, the anarchists are in the workers' movement. Radically opposed to Walesa, and all compromises between the leadership of Solidarity and the POUP (the Polish Communist Party). They are often with us in the front-line of strikes and demonstrations. This is only the beginning of this movement and we shall soon see how it will develop, but in any case this libertarian current testifies - in my eyes - to the renewal of the Polish workers' movement.

The AFP (Polish Anarchist Federation) has the problem that it's a movement composed essentially of young people cut off from the Polish anarchist tradition, and which often have 'anti-organisational' reflexes. It has grown in a very short time from a few dozen to around 500 militants. The movement organised a demonstration to commemorate the Krondstadt Rising which drew several thousand people in Gdansk.

Anti-nuclear actions in Gdansk and Pozman in April and May 1989 drew 10,000 people and stopped the construction of a nuclear power station. International contacts have increased, especially with other East European countries.

In August 1989 a demonstration against the Berlin Wall was organised on the same day in Poland and in Hungary in co-operation with the Hungarian libertarian group 'Autonomia' in Budapest.

anarchist movement

are a tiny minority, but a recent poll showed that 80% were in favour of a Hungary 'free' of its 150,000 Jews and 100,000 Gypsies.

The Trotskyists are working within the Group for an Alternative Left. Their ideas, and their rhetoric of 'workers' councils', could have some influence amongst Hungarians - but are hindered by a language little different from that of the 'Communist' rulers. They are developing international contacts, and plan to create a Revolutionary Workers' Party of Hungary.

Finally, the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party wants a Swedish-style set-up. It was created by old Social-Democrat militants who were meeting together to campaign for the 'rehabilitation' of some of their comrades, shot by the 'Communists'. There is a fairly strong current amongst the young which supports this group, and it could become the second force of opposition behind the MDF, if not the first.

But the opposition is not limited to political parties. Some intellectuals are grouped within the Union of Scientific Workers (TDDSz). The independent union Munkasszolidaritas (Workers' Solidarity) is more important. It was born at a meeting of SzDsz for the workers. It limits itself to defence of workers' interests. It refuses all links with political groupings, but also refuses any vision of a new society.

It is no more than a large committee, several hundred strong. But it could be an important force if the economic situation becomes more aggravated.

Strikes have taken place in the mines and in industry. The 'Communist' bureaucrats, terrified by the spectre of 1956 and the Polish strikes in August 1988, gave in to the demands. The ecologist movement is relatively strong in Hungary, concentrating on the struggle against the hydro-electric dams on the Danube. But it has failed to take up the struggle against nuclear power.

In May 1989, the tensions within the ruling party came to a head, when a group of four was placed at the head of the political bureau. These were among the most well-known 'reformers' within the Party (Pozsgai, Nemeth) alongside a more moderate reformer (Nyers) and a 'conservative' (Grosz). However, this compromise failed, and an alliance of 'ultra-reformers' and the 'moderate' reformers led to the dissolving of the party, and the establishment of a new party - the Hungarian Socialist Party - pledged to social-democracy and rejecting all allusions to communism, and democratic centralism within the Party.

Promises

The new Party hoped to dump the conservatives and rally most of the membership. However, only 70,000 have joined (10% of the old Party membership), whilst an equal number, rallying to the conservatives, have kept the old name Socialist Workers Party.

The new 'reforming' Party has so-far retained its 'cells' in the factories and in the 'workers militia' and its leadership is a compromise between 'moderates' and 'ultra-reformers'.

In the first round of Hungary's complex multi-party 'free elections' on March 25, all parties with their roots in the old 'Communist' government

performed badly, with many leading party figures suffering humiliating defeats.

In the second round, on April 8, the 'centre-right' Democratic Forum fared best - winning 165 of the 386 assembly seats. The Forum announced plans to form a 'grand coalition', probably including the rightist Alliance of Free Democrats and the Smallholders Party.

Socialist Party candidates won only 33 seats, with the hardline Stalinist Socialist Workers Party being all but obliterated. The Socialist Party is in a very weak position to scrabble for a place in the coalition.

The ex-'Communists' gamble - that by offering to share power they could avoid losing it all together - seems to have gone badly wrong.

Hungary - the Past...

1907 - The journal Tarsadalmi Forradalorm appears, advancing anarchist communist ideas up to 1911. One of the editors is Ervin Batthyanny (born 1877) who after having spent a long time in England - where he met the anarchist thinker Kropotkin - devotes himself to work with agricultural workers. With other young anarchists he breaks away from the group of Eugene Heinrich Schmitt - Tolstoyan pacifist - to create a popular libertarian organisation.

A group led by Ervin Szabo (1877-1918) opposes its collectivist programme, and believes that the movement should be built on the lines of French anarcho-syndicalism.

1914-1918 Szabo organises coordination of shop stewards in key factories with anti-militarist movement initiated by Galileo Circle, composed of socialists and liberals. At his funeral in 1918, thousands turn out. As a result - and because of the Russian revolution - the Budapest Soviet is set up, but crushed by reactionary forces. Many anarchists are killed, but many also rally to the new 'Communist' Party, fooled by Lenin's apparent libertarian rhetoric. Among them are Tibor Szamuely, the anarcho-syndicalist Rabinowicz and Otto Korvin. Many of these later perish in Stalin's purges when exiled in the USSR.

The fascist Admiral Horthy sets up a regime and continues the liquidation of anarchist groups.

1944 - Anarchist groups re-emerge around the veteran Torockoi (who was 80 in 1945). The first libertarian action is against German forces, by an anarchist student group. One of them, surnamed Christ (!) - a 15 year old poet(!) - is captured. In prison he meets comrade Aton M of the Hungarian-Yugoslavian anarchist group Bacska ('the South') which is a hundred strong, and is one of the most important resistance groups.

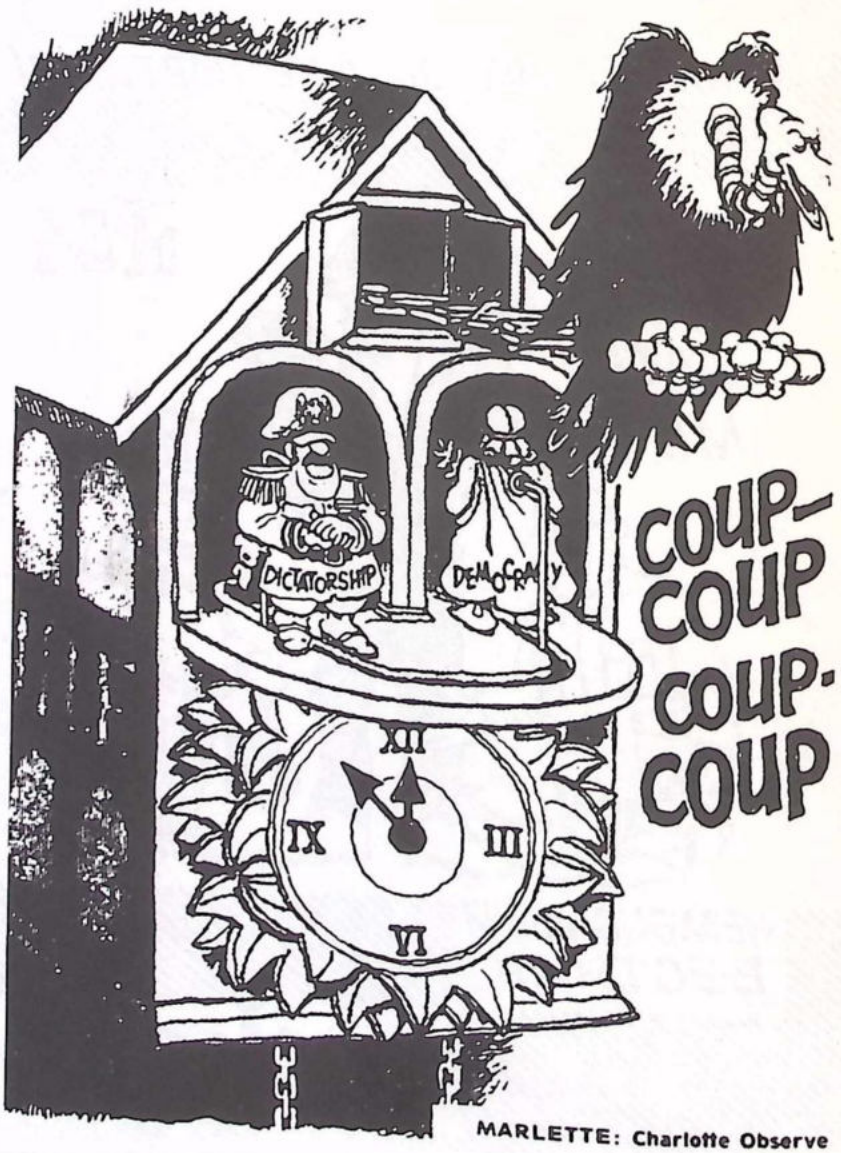
October 1944 - Christ and the Russian anarchist Alexei Korsakin are freed after ther Szalazi coup against Horthy.

They make contact with Torockoi and with P.M. - a student who had set up an anarchist group supported by the 'Communists'. They start to harass the Nazi and Fascist military, adopting the legendary red-belt of Korsakin. They refuse unity of action with 'Communists', who denounce them to the Germans - who arrest 67 militants including P.M. His group splits, and two thirds go over to the 'Communists'.

Korsakin's group - wearing red belts - attack and destroy two units of the Hungarian river fleet, in central Budapest. The following night, Christ's group - Sz. F. ('Libertarian Youth') blow up a munitions dump. A third group are executed after an attack on Nazi Party headquarters. The movement continues attacks up to the Battle of Budapest, which claims 200,000 lives. The movement decides to safeguard its forces for the political struggle to come after the expulsion of the fascists.

July 1945 - The movement regroups. Three tendencies emerge. P.M.'s group wants a working arrangement with the 'Communists' against the ruling class. Torockoi's group wants the legalisation of the movement, Korsakin's and Christ's groups want to continue the armed struggle against the State and the Russian troops. Torockoi's views gain majority. A print-shop is set-up, and propaganda distributed. The movement has 500 militants, and its influence spreads.

'Communists' then ban the movement. Torockoi dies after arrest. Four anarchist students open fire on Russian troops, and die in the fighting. In the factories of Csepel island, anarchists lead the only strike after liberation from the fascists. Thirty workers, including 24 anarchists, are subsequently executed. The movement is liquidated. P.M. flees to Italy, Christ and Korsakin to France.



MARLETTE: Charlotte Observe

B Traven: the voice of anger

"MY BIOGRAPHY WOULD not disappoint you, but it is my own private affair, and I want to keep it to myself. I do this not out of egotism... the biography of a creative person is completely unimportant. If the person cannot be recognised in his works, then he isn't worth a damn, and neither is his work", B Traven, letter to his publisher.

B Traven was the author of The Treasure of the Sierra Madre (made into a film with Humphey Bogart) The Death Ship and many other novels written between 1920 and 1940.

In the sixties his books began to be reprinted, and many radicals and revolutionaries began to read him. They felt great admiration for his depiction of working people's lives and of the great elemental forces than run through times of revolution.

The shadowy Traven appears to have been born as Otto Feige, son of a potter in 1882, in what was then Germany and is now Poland. He left home after military service, re-emerging as the actor Ret Marut. During the First World War he began to bring out a fiery little anarchist magazine Die Ziegelbrenner (Brickburner), railing against the war and the ruling class.

In 1919 revolution broke out in Bavaria, and workers formed councils and armed militias. with other anarchists and revolutionary socialists, he participated in this uprising, and when the troops from Berlin viciously smashed this manifestation of freedom, he was sentenced to death by a military tribunal. He escaped by minutes from a firing squad and continued to publish the Brickburner underground. He greeted the "six hundred honest revolutionaries" who had been slaughtered by the soldiers, "I greet you all again in death! All of you, without a single exception, not even excepting the so-called 'murderers of hostages'. All of you died for the sacred cause of human progress; and all of us make mistakes."

He left Europe in 1924, arriving in Mexico. Here he claimed tha he was American, born in Chicago of Scandinavian immigrants. About this time he began to write his books, adopting the name B Traven. The first of these were published in Germany.

Not until he was on his death bed did he admit he was Ret Marut. He had wished to remain obscure because of the exposure in his books of the terrible exploitation of the Mexican Indian peasants and because he had become an organiser for the 'Wobblies' - nickname for the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary workers' union based in the US (His organising activities are graphically and amusingly described in The Cotton-Pickers).

He masqueraded under the name T Torsvan and even worked as a consultant on the film The Treasure of the Sierra Madre - never revealing that he was the author.

One of his finest books is the Death Ship. In hard-boiled style, it tells the story of an American sailor stranded in Antwerp without papers. He becomes the stateless person shuffled from country to country and harasses at all turns by the bureaucracy and by the police. Because he cannot get a job on an official ship, he is forced to work on the Death Ship, which runs arms to whoever will buy.

The book is a brilliant exposure of the evils of the Nation State and national frontiers. The Death Ship itself represents all the horrors of the system of exploitation - militarism and profiteering out of war, and the utter degradation its sailors suffer. Yet through the agonising conditions that they face, we see them preserve their humanity and their willingness to resist.

Six books - The Jungle Novels - deal with the lives of the Mexican Indian peasants - how they are fooled, exploited and beaten by the landlords, and their servants, the police and foremen. They deal with the horrific conditions in the lumber- camps and build slowly and excruciatingly to a revolutionary climax. These books are filled with scenes of brutality; and revolutionaries in their turn inflict brutality on the bosses. Traven raises his voice in anger again and again, against the obscene set-up. "It was no fault of the rebels that they were animated by sentiments of death and destruction...they gave proofs of cruelty only because their adversaries and oppressors were a hundred times more cruel and savage than they themselves, and such proofs were provided only to safeguard their interests".

Traven fully appreciates the power of mass action. As one of revolutionaries says, "If you are in mass, you begin to be worth something. With the mass you possess a thousand heads and two thousand rigorous arms; and when you're in mass, you have the superiority... the strongest lion is disarmed when he faces ten million ants, and is compelled to abandon his prey which he wishes to capture. You are the ants, and the bosses are the lions".

Traven writes with intimate knowledge of working lives especially the Mexican Indians. His books aren't pretty. They are not about refined, cultured people with complicated psychological problems. They are about the wretched of the earth. They are about class struggle. they are about revolution.

As the sailor Stanislav says in the Death Ship, "There is justice in this world. Heaps of it. But not for sailors, and not for working men making trouble. Justice is for the people who can afford to have it".

Many of Traven's works are available in paperback.

How can ambulance crews win?

YOUR ARTICLE ON the ambulance dispute in Organise! 18 raises some important issues. Here are some comments on them.

In your comments on the move towards all-out strike action (under the subheading "Push") you argue that such a move would be "fraught with dangers", and say it would be better to concentrate on spreading the strike to other health workers. You also say that an all-out strike would undermine support. There is a basic contradiction in saying ambulance workers should not strike because they could threaten working class people's lives and then going on to advocate strikes by other health workers. Surely strike action by these other workers could also threaten life?

What you don't mention in the article is that low pay in the ambulance service had led to understaffing before the dispute, which was already resulting in people dying unnecessarily. The pay dispute was in part aimed at rectifying this situation.

Anarchist

The strategy of the unions involved was to build public support (the same strategy which failed in both the News International and P&O disputes). You seem to have partially taken this strategy on board. We would say that, as ambulance workers are primarily part of the working class rather than some 'special case', they should use all the tactics which revolutionaries would recommend to any other group of workers.

Your recommendation that the ambulance staff should have concentrated on spreading the dispute to other workers rather than on escalating their own action is too abstract. Secondary picketting is illegal and the union would have attempted to stop it. Your recommendation therefore assumes that the ambulance workers are mostly anti-union. In reality the reverse is true.

That is why wildcat strikes, which would have been a first step to breaking the unions' control, should have been supported by you. In any case, we would say that it is virtually a principle of class struggle anarchism that you support the rebel workers against the union leaders.

There are also tactical reasons why the strikes should have been supported. Firstly, it is important that action is taken as rapidly as possible. A war of attrition only helps the bosses. Secondly, workers are more likely to strike in support of your cause if you yourself are on strike. Finally a nationwide strike would have strengthened the ambulance workers because management would no longer be able to keep them divided by suspending some, whilst others were still working.

The basic position that we put in our leaflets was to spread the dispute to which ever workers would be likely to strike in solidarity. This included health workers but also other workers who have more 'industrial muscle'.

We hope that these comments will help further the discussions about what our orientation towards strike action should be.

Yours in struggle,
The former member of the
ACF 'M4 Corridor' Group
B M Makhno
London
WC1N 3XX

AUTHOR'S REPLY: Thanks for your comments. Here are a few of my own.

You seem to take two 'facts' as self-evident truths. Firstly, that the maintenance of accident and emergency cover was 'holding back the dispute', and, secondly, that its withdrawal would guarantee the ambulance workers a swift victory.

I think both these views are flawed. To begin with, though I want to look at the arguments that underlie your assertion that there is a single 'group of tactics' which we should recommend to all workers.

Our article utterly rejected the unions' 'special case' argument - a strategy that set out to isolate ambulance crews from other health workers. But it's no use pretending patients, but if workers asserted their direct control over levels of 'emergency cover' on the wards and elsewhere, that risk would be minimised.

There's another difference to the kind of dispute strategy we should argue for with different that every single group of workers can and should follow an identical course of industrial action in each and every dispute.

Workers punching out Monster Munch shapes in a crisp factory are hardly in an identical position to nurses working in a premature baby unit. They're both groups of workers, both undeniably part of the working class - but in different economic circumstances. We'd argue that crisp workers in a dispute should walk off the line, shut the factory and spread flying pickets to other plants and suppliers. Your blanket argument would lead you to argue that those nurses should switch off the incubators and walk off the ward. It would mean telling workers in nightshelters, or in women's refugees to lock the doors and kick the residents out onto the streets. It would mean telling benefit and dole office workers to shut up shop, and stop the sending of giros to the unemployed.

We shouldn't mimic the Left's myopic worldview that supports any sectional action by a group of workers, regardless of the consequences that action might have on other sections of the class.

Certainly, it's often impossible for groups of workers to take action that doesn't have an impact on other working class people. The crews' withdrawal of outpatient cover certainly inconvenienced many patients. But there's an obvious distinction between pulling people out of car crashes and saving heart attack victims, and routine work on the wards - it's just plain puerile to suggest there isn't. Action by other health workers might affect groups of workers. We'd never advocate that - faced with a lock-out - those Monster Munch workers should re-occupy the factory and start up the production lines again themselves. Neither should printworkers, car workers, steel workers, builders, or any other group of manufacturing or production workers involved in a strike seek to keep the wheels of their industry turning.

But the situation in the ambulance dispute was blatantly different. We should totally support the crews' seizure of their stations, vehicles and equipment, and back their efforts to run an accident and emergency service direct to the public - completely outside the control of the Service bosses'. This has nothing to do with seeking to maintain 'public support' as you seem to think - it was the course of action most threatening to ambulance bosses, most likely to win support from other sections of the class, and a good position from which to appeal to other groups of workers for solidarity action.

Unity

Where it happened, crews' seizure of the service clearly panicked ambulance bosses who threw everything they had into trying to put a stop to it. Why did they do that unless they feared the consequences of seeing such action spread? Had that happened nationally, it would have succeeding in uniting the crews and put them all on the same footing.

Had the Tories then moved in to try to shut down a national accident and emergency service that the crews were running themselves, the resultant carnage would have been directly the government's responsibility, and the spotlight would have been on them, not on the crews.

But to return to the 'assumption' that I began with: why would an isolated all-out strike have given the crews that crucial bit more leverage to tip the scales their way?

In manufacturing and production industries the strength of any group of workers is plainly economic. The damage they can inflict on a company's profits through a strike can force a 'better deal' from their bosses. Ambulance workers have near-zero economic clout. Unless we believe that the Tories fear 'outraged public opinion', why should an all-out ambulance strike force the government to back down? Would their 'concern for humanity' bring them back to the negotiating table? As the body count rose - who would be liable to crack first - Thatcher or the crews?

Is it not also likely that faced with one Hillsborough-type incident, and an all-out strike would crack as crews responded to a major emergency?

You're right that most of the more militant ambulance workers were in support of an all-out strike as a way to bring the dispute to a head. But there was practically no talk of this being the pre-cursor to spreading the strike throughout the health service and to other groups

of workers beyond. The demand - whilst against the wishes of the unions' leadership - was (as our original article stated) still locked in the confines of trade unionism. It reflected more a sense of desperation than of a rising tide of conscious militancy. The overwhelming ballot vote in favour of a universally hated settlement was later proof of this.

Spread

Calls to spread the dispute to other workers were far from 'abstract' as you claim. For a start ambulance workers were never going to win on their own, and we shouldn't peddle the myth that they could if they only acted 'militantly enough'. Secondly, the health service is teeming with anger, resentment and bitterness - there's a huge groundswell of opposition to all manner of government plans for the NHS. The ambulance dispute could have been the focus to turn that anger into generalised action on all fronts. Of course secondary action is illegal and, certainly, the union would move against it - but should revolutionaries simply 'go with the flow', and not challenge workers' acceptance of the union?

The article welcomed the growing split between many of the crews and the union negotiators, but it's hardly a 'principle of class struggle anarchism ' to mutely and uncritically tail-end rank and file feeling if we think it's focusing in the wrong direction.

You're dead right that a 'war of attrition only helps the bosses', but that wasn't what we were advocating. You're right too over the need to unite crews in national action. We agree. But I'm unsure whether you think the ambulance crews could have won by themselves or not: at one point you say the idea of '...spreading the dispute to other workers... is too abstract', but later you say that such a strategy is you're 'basic position'.

Decisive

It wasn't the maintenance of emergency cover that led to the defeat of the ambulance dispute. It was the crews total isolation from other health service workers, and the lack of widespread, effective solidarity action from other workers. It was the fact that despite Roger Poole's deep unpopularity, workers' resentment towards the union never resulted in a decisive break from it.

We can only hope that the bitterness left by the appalling settlement, and the politicisation of a traditionally 'moderate' group of workers, provide a better basis for building the kind of action needed to win the next ambulance dispute.

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

Please try to keep letters to around 250 words - otherwise we may need to edit them.

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. Women's oppression predates capitalism and cannot be solely explained in terms of class. Anarchist communism will not be achieved without abolishing sexual oppression. However, women are divided across class lines and therefore should not attempt to form a united women's movement. But working class women, may in times of struggle, need to organise autonomously and they may at times feel more united as a sex than as part of a class. The unity between working class men and women will be stronger in the long term than the interests that women have cross-class. However, this unity must be based on full equality.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives wil always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchist we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

PRISON RIOTS ERUPT

THE LAST FEW weeks have seen a great upsurge in working class fight back, not just on the streets of Britain during the anti-poll tax demonstrations and riots, but also inside the walls of Her Majesty's prisons.

As soon as prisoners took over the wings of Strangeways in Manchester, burnt and demolished their cells and other parts of the prison, the state and press were ready with stories of bodies strewn around the prison as violent prisoner attacked sex offender. Just what you'd expect from the uncontrollable elements in our society, so they said. We now know this to be completely untrue.

Media attempts to remove any public support for the prisoners failed as they climbed on the roof and told us the truth. Since then the state has engaged in out and out psychological warfare on the prisoners. They told us that outspoken spokesman Paul Taylor was a convicted rapist, that other prisoners were afraid of reprisals from the 'hard core' if they gave in, and that prisoners were ill with food poisoning. And all this while police and screws in riot gear attempted to regain control by force, and blasted the prisoners on the roof with loud music sirens and firecrackers, whenever it looked like they might be getting the facts across.

The Strangeways riots inspired similar unrest in many other prisons and youth institutions; Bedford, Bristol, Brixton, Cardiff, Dartmoor, Durham, Glen Parva, Humberside Eventhorpe, Hull, Leeds, Lindholme, Long Lartin, Pentonville, Perth, Shepton Mallet, Shotts, Stoke Heath, Wandsworth. To name but a few!

Whilst the mainstream press have been spreading lies, the Left press have been falling over themselves calling for better, nicer prisons and more screws to 'take care' of them, so that it won't happen again.

An incredible 1 in 1000 people of Britain's population are in prison at any one time, mostly working class people. Are the liberal prison reformers trying to tell us all prisoners want is cleaner cells, longer exercise periods, and one to one attention from a personal screw?

Of course, some people (like rapists) will need to be reckoned with even in an anarchist society. But prisons are just the hard end of the state which locks away people it can't control. We support as equals in the class struggle, prisoners fighting the state in the the only way left open to them. And they'll need all the support they can get. As we go to press, the outcome of the Strangeways occupation is uncertain, but the prisoners still on the roof must know they face either life sentences in isolation, or worse if the government gets tired of waiting.

T/SOR/16/6

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

40p
Aug-Nov
1990
Issue 20

The class struggle in Ireland

ROMANIA'S MINERS: THUGS OR HEROES?

POLL TAX TROUBLES DEEPEN

TRAF SQ DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

BATTLE OF THE BOYNE

LETTERS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on membership of area and interest groups and individuals. We have members in the folllowing areas:

Birmingham, Blackpool, Chesterfield, Coventry, Co Durham, Essex, Glasgow, Halifax, Kent, London, Newcastle, Northampton, Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield, Sussex, Swansea, and York.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS: Write to: P. O. Box 125, Coventry CV3 5QT.

Want to know more?

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION, SEND THIS TO:

P. O. Box 125
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CV3 5QT

Name: .....

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ORGANISE

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise! - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will endeavour to publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree withour A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the November 1990 issue are September 17 for features and reviews, and September 30 for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to OUR NEW ADDRESS:

Nottingham ACF, PO Box 97, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 5LQ.

PRESS FUND

Organise! doesn't carry pages of advertisements so revenue doesn't automatically come in. It survives on sales and the goodwill of its readers and supporters. That goodwill is probably more important now than it ever has been.

As the fightback against the poll tax grows, as the collapse of Leninism in Eastern Europe provides the chance for a renewed class struggle anarchist movement on an international level, it becomes vital that the ideas of libertarian communism become widespread within every section of the working class - the ideas of running society in a free and self-organised way, where there are no longer classes, borders, or armed forces, where money has been abolished and where racism, sexism and exploitation are things of the past.

If you support our ideas then help us to spread them. Not only by sending us as much money as you can afford to our Press Fund, but also by taking a bundle of Organise! to sell at your workplace, dole queue, tenants association or poll tax group. (Bundles on sale or return basis from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1).

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund: Romford £2.50; Oxford £2.50; Aldershot£1; Romford £12.50; Coventry £10; London £83.92; ACF fund raising£58. Keep it coming in! Money to the Nottingham address above.

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Organise! back issues

Back issues of Organise! (from issue 14 to issue 19 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address (as are a few copies of issues of its forerunner - Virus). They cost 40p & sae each and include:

Organise! 17: Anarchy in the Eastern block; Cambodia: what future; Militant and the poll tax. Organise! 18: All change in Eastern Europe?; ambulance crews fight; Gerry Healy's death. Organise! 19: The poll tax and prison riots; the myth of Mandela; ecology and class.

AFTER THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE RIOT:

The State goes on the offensive

THE EVENTS DURING and after the 31st March in Trafalgar Square graphically demonstrate the various ways in which the State will attack working class people when they fight back against its oppressive political, social and economic measures.

When 200,000 people took to the streets to protest against the Poll Tax, the State - in the shape of the Metropolitan Police and its riot squads - had already decided that everyone on that march was a de facto criminal, to be dealt with by baton, riot shield, charging horses and any other violent measure that it took to keep us off 'their' streets.

Courts

But smashing us in the face with a truncheon isn't the only way in which the State keeps us down. Once they've done that, the massive power of the Judiciary and Courts can be brought to bear. Immediately after the 31st the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Metropolitan Police set up a 'riot prosecution service' - the first of its kind - made up of 137 full-time officers and 13 lawyers, to prepare cases and help make yet further arrests.

One of the first acts of this so-called 'Operation Carnaby' was to seize photographs from the press, who - with the exception of the 'Guardian' and 'Independent' reporters - willingly handed over up to 30,000 still pictures to complement 90 hours of the Mets own video tape.

These scum then orchestrated a massive and hysterical campaign to help the CPS and Met. track down others involved, running such features as "Gallery of Hate" (Sunday Mirror, 13/05), and the infamous "If you know 'em, shop 'em" (The People, 13/05).

It is clear that the Press is nothing but the instrument of the State, and our first consideration as a class in any similar situation should be to stop anyone taking pictures of us. We must smash any cameras before taking on the Pigs as an absolute priority. Secondly, we must start to consider "masking up" before the march, as they have done in other countries around the world for years.

Inevitably, there followed many more arrests (over 100 in addition to the 350+ arrested on the day), with paramilitary-style dawn raids in the Stamford Hill and Dalston areas of Hackney to name just two incidents. Meanwhile, wherever the CPS has had half a chance, it has upped - or added on - charges to those arrested. Or, to keep cases from being heard before a potentially sympathetic jury, reduced them instead : basically, whatever it takes to secure a conviction.

One example among many was of a Nottingham student sentenced to a month for nothing more than throwing an empty can that hit no-one (he pleaded guilty, the prosecution asked for leniency, but the State wants blood). As one defendant put it "People were arrested at random and charged at random had no idea what offence I was supposed to have committed. It was like a lottery."

Trafalgar Square (and the recent events in Bucharest) have shown once again that there is no such thing as a "benign" State, that the buzzword "Democracy" is a sick myth. All States will crush working class people when they try to fight back against poverty and oppression, all States must be be destroyed.

Scum

The reaction of the Left has been typical of what working class people have come to expect. 'Militant' were the first to show themselves as police collaborators after the 31st, with Steve Nally losing no time in announcing that the 'Miltitant' dominated All British Anti Poll Tax Federation (ABAPTF) would be "naming names", swiftly followed by them calling on the 'labour' movement to "unmask" and "deal with ... the disruptors and disorganisers (sic) of Saturdays demonstration" ('Militant' Editorial, 6th April).

Tommy Sheridan concurred, saying the ABAPTF would have "no qualms" about "informing the police" of any rioters it could identify. In Nottingham, "Militant" scum echoed this threat in an open meeting of anti-poll tax activists held on the 1st April.

Since then, they have been scrambling to backslide from this position after the wave of anger that met these announcements. But it doesn't matter what pitiful excuses they make now, they will always collaborate with the State against working class people, or (like the Socialist Workers Party) tail-end real struggles with laughable whinging about "a lack of leadership". Among all this mayhem, the Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign (TSDC), and several affiliated local campaigns have provided valuable support and aid for defendants. The message is clear : Fuck the Left and let's organise ourselves for anarchist communism ! •

The Trafalgar Square Defence Campaign was set up by defendants and their solicitors in the aftermath of the 31st of March to help counter the massive State campaign against those arrested both on the day and since.

It's avowed aims are to "unconditionally support all those arrested", to be "run by and accountable to those arrested" and to be "independent of all other organisations".

The campaign has gathered information on on over 150 defendants, raised money to help with legal costs etc., co-ordinated solicitors and defendants, and provided a forum for discussion and solidarity for those arrested. Representatives try to be at every court case, and it is currently fighting to get access to the 30,000 still photographs and 90 hours of video tape evidence that the CPS is trying to withhold from defence lawyers.

The TSDC has become the national focus for defendants, but local groups affiliated to it have sprung up in Birmingham, Nottingham and Brighton, to help people locally.

The campaign urges anyone who has been arrested, or anyone who has any information that may be of use to defendants to contact them or their local affiliated groups as soon as possible. It is vital that we build a strong and co-ordinated front against the forces of the State arrayed against us, so setting up local support groups raising the matter at local anti-Poll Tax groups and raising money by benefit gigs, collections etc, will all be of help. Contact the TSDC at: Trafalgar Sq Defence Campaign, c/o Haldane Society Lawyers, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1; (tel 071 833 8958).

Anarchists from East and West meet

ORGANISED BY THE 'Germinal' group of the Italian Anarchist Federation, this conference was one of the first of its kind, especially since the recent events in Eastern Europe.

200 people were present, including most of the Western European countries as well as the United States, Canada, and most Eastern European countries.

There were discussions on fundamental questions facing the international anarchist movement. It was vitally important to make contact, and above all to share our experiences of struggle and our conceptions of society, in order to move forward to transform it.

During these debates certain 'comrades' in the West have implied that a market society is compatable with a libertarian society, that society cannot be analysed in terms of social antagonisms. In other words, the class struggle is not a priority. This was most noticeable with the U.S. and Canadian delegation.

Others affirmed the Great Vague Ideas of Anarchism - abstentionism and anti-clericalism, but how useful were these incantations to the East European comrades?

What's more, when it came to discussing concrete solidarity, again the American delegation proposed the setting up of an International Press Agency via computer network! But is this this possible for the Eastern Europeans, or politically interesting for militants of both East and West? Especially if it was merely an exchange of information without analysis?

The events in Eastern Europe have shaken the preconceptions of many Western comrades. As anarchist communists, with a class analysis of society we must base ourselves on our experiences in social movements. We need to reach accurate and useful conclusions about the nature of international capitalism, but not with a feeling of superiority over our Eastern European comrades. This is the sense of the motion drawn up by some French, British and Austrians present.●

STATEMENT FOR THE TRIESTE CONFERENCE 14-17 APRIL 1990 DRAWN UP BY DELEGATES FROM THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION, THE ANARCHIST WORKERS GROUP AND THE NORTHERN ANARCHIST NETWORK [BRITAIN], UNION DES TRAVAILLEURS COMMUNISTES LIBERTAIRES AND THE COLLECTIF JEUNES LIBERTAIRES [FRANCE] AND TAT BLATT, SCHWARZE DISTEL AND AUSGEMEINSCHAFT [AUSTRIA].

The representatives of libertarian communist organisations present at this meeting of Western European Libertarian comrades want to draw attention to certain points in the debate with our Eastern European comrades.

Because of the tenor of the debates in the different commissions that have been held, we hope that our Eastern European comrades do not return to their countries where state capitalism and authoritarian marxism are collapsing, and where the building of a new mode of organistion of society is the order of the day, with a false image of the libertarians of the West. These comrades should know that:

1. We are not advocates of the Western consumer society.

2. We are totally and unreservedly opposed to the market economy and the doctrine of free enterprise

3. We aim not to act on the margins of society, but in its' midst, to transform it, in social movements, because for us the central agent of the revolutionary process is the working class.

We find it disquieting , to say the least, for some libertarians to seek to export anarchist dogmas to countries where anarchism had as its theoreticians and has today such reference points as people like Bakunin, Kropotkin, Archinov and Makhno.

Within a re-defined framework of discussion, we will be ready to fully contribute to the debate and we think it possible that some initiatives of concrete solidarity will be possible.

NEWS FROM EASTERN EUROPE

Based on Reports from countries present at the meeting.

POLAND : The longest established and strongest anarchist movement in Eastern Europe. Within the Anarchist Federation, there are twenty local groupings. There is little political unity between these groups, which are active mainly in the 'counter-culture'. The Federation has difficulties in gaining influence in the working class because of these problems.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA : There are two hundred activists within the Czechoslovak Anarchist Union (CAS), and there are also several active independent groups (e.g. in Prague there is the group Prague Beruschki). About 50% of the CAS is workers, 25% unemployed and 25% students, all from working class backgrounds. CAS has no clear political perpsectives as yet.

ROMANIA : There was no constituted group at the conference, although Nicolas Trifon who is exiled in France was present - he is editor of the excellent libertarian magazine on Eastern Europe,"IZTOK".

YUGOSLAVIA : Again there is no constituted group, but some individuals were present at Trieste. Some were in favour of a market economy, some were opposed.

USSR : The anarcho-syndicalist group KAS was set up in May, and it drew in the network around the magazine OBCHTCHINA, giving it several active groups throughout the federation. Its' representative at Trieste were against the class struggle, for a market economy, for non-violence and for participation in municipal elections. Nevertheless the KAS has several currents within it which do not agree with these views. Outside the KAS are two other groupings, the ASSA (individualists and anarcho-syndicalists) and the AKRS (Union of Revolutionary Anarchist Communists) which was not represented at Trieste.

BULGARIA: Appearing in autumn 1989 the Anarchist Communist Federation of Bulgaria was set up on the iniative of exiles. It has libertarian communist positions, but for the moment seems cut off from youth and the social movements.

The East European movement is very young. It has emerged after many years of a political Ice Age. The only experience to which it relates is the 'Revolution of 1989' with its many contradictions. It will committ many errors. It is up to class struggle anarchists in the West to debate with those in the Eastern European countries, exchange experiences, provide literature and material support. Only in this way, and not from an arrogant, sterile 'principled' position, can worthwhile developments take place.●

ROMANIA'S MINERS:

Loyal thugs of the ruling class?

THE 'TRAMPS, GYPSIES, students and oppositionists' who hurled molotov cocktails at police lines, stormed and set fire to their main headquarters, and attacked a government-run TV station in Bucharest, on June 13, were "the same sort of embittered youth that battled with your police in the Trafalgar Square riots", Romanian President Ion Illiescu confided to a visiting Labour Party MP later that month.

Peripheral

These 'golani' ('down-and-outs' as they were dubbed) had, he explained, launched an "organised attempt" to bring down his National Salvation Front (NSF) government. In a later thank-you speech to Romanian miners who he summoned to Bucharest to stamp out the protest, he described how their actions had prevented "an attempted coup by a force of extremist, rightist elements... with iron-guardist and fascist character(istics)... (who had drawn on) all kinds of peripheral, parasitic elements of our society".

These included, 'black-marketeers', 'pimps', 'smugglers', 'ex-prisoners', and - refering to the protestors who for seven weeks had been camped in University Square - "those who lived in a drugged climate of moral misery and corruption".

It was Illiescu's success in painting the Bucharest rioters as a diseased, quasi-fascist mob of degenerates and untouchables (made easier by the NSF's total control over the national media and the orchestrated destruction of opposition newspaper offices by the miners) that enabled him to first isolate, and then crush, this the most serious threat to his rule since the December coup and the ousting of Ceausescu.

Attempting to contain and neutralise uprisings - by claiming them to be the work of hostile, alien elements, seperate from the rest of the oppressed - is a favourite ruling class strategy. In Hungary in 1956, the Government blamed the workers' uprising on "fascists and reactionaries"; Thatcher blamed "criminal elements" for the poll tax riots; Lech Walesa blamed recent railworkers strikes in Poland on the agitation of "dis-affected ex-Communists"; Strangeways Governor Brendan O'Friel blamed "an explosion of evil" on "the work of the Devil". It's proved to be an effective tactic.

When Illiescu called on the miners to rush to Bucharest to "defend the revolution" from the golani he was confident both that they would come, and that they would do their job with a brutal enthusiasm.

Like Ceausescu, Illiescu realised the importance to the regime of maintaining the loyalties of powerful, key groups of industrial workers. After a damaging strike in 1977, the mines were flooded with Securitate (secret police) agents, to quell unrest and spy on militant workers.

On assuming office, one of the first acts of the Illiescu administration was to double miners' wages, introduce a four-day week, and halve some production targets. Whilst the vast majority of the poor and working class in Romania have continued to exist in abject poverty, since the 'ending' of the Ceausescu dictatorship, the miners have enjoyed some tangible material benefits from NSF rule. Their living and working conditions remain utterly miserable (90 miners were killed in accidents in the Jiu Valley field alone last year). They still often have to crawl to the pit-face on their hands and knees in baking heat and choking dust - but now they earn twice as much for doing so. After years under the yoke of Ceausescu "people are grateful, pathetically so, for small improvements in their daily lives" as one commentator put it.

When news came from Bucharest on official TV that a gang of 'hoodlums and work-shy students' were attempting to overthrow the government and put those improvements at risk, the miners collected their clubs, boarded the government-organised trains and prepared (for the third time this year) to protect Illiescu, and - by doing so, they believed - themselves. For the present, the NSF has bought itself the loyalty of the miners.

As Bucharest hospitals filled up with the seemingly random victims of the miners' violence, Securitate agents in the capital donned miners work-clothes and directed operations to ensure all important targets (ie the homes and headquarters of NSF opponents) were hit. Riot cops joined in too. The threat of a 'coup' allowed Illiescu a cover under which - through the miners - he could move to terrorise into silence all forms of opposition. Rival party offices were ransacked, their printing presses smashed. Known militants and dissidents were arrested, others escaped the net and fled into hiding.

If ordinary Romanians needed any more persuading of just how little had been changed by 'the revolution' - for all their bloody sacrifice - the return of an atmosphere of fear and panic to the streets of the capital was a graphic confirmation that though the tyrant Ceausescu was dead, the tyranny lived on.

To make any sense of the confusing alliance of class forces that did battle on the streets of Bucharest, and examine what might happen in the future, we need to study the politics and objectives of the different sets of combatants.

What then of the golani, the 'great unwashed'? They took Illiescu's intended insult, and turned into a sign of their resistance: 'yes, we are the golani, and proud of it'. Their encampment in University Square became a focus for opposition after the NSF (who first pledged to stand down after a 'caretaker' period in government at the start of the year) won the elections, stitched up for them by their control of the national press and TV. As Romania's first new Parliamentary session opened, a crowd of demonstrators gathered outside chanting "Down with Communism", reflecting the growing realisation of a vocal minority that the new government was in fact stuffed full of Ceausescu's old hench-men and officials.

Class

The golani that set up camp in the Square, were - it seems - mainly students, but included groups of workers and the unemployed too. They were united in their opposition to Stalinist-style 'communism' and in the belief that the NSF "have stolen the revolution". Beyond that, as in every other cross-class, intellectual 'opposition movement' elsewhere in Eastern Europe, they will have differed wildly: between those wanting an immediate introduction of a western-style market, or the return of a monarchy; some left-ists, syndicalists, Trotskyists; and anarchists and libertarian communists too.

What got quickly lost in the media coverage of the initial rioting in this country, was that some of the golani were totally opposed to attacks on the police station and tried to defuse the situation by agreeing to end their camp-protest, and disperse peacefully. Only a section of the golani had prepared "what

was obviously a vast reserve of petrol bombs", and were willing to take on the cops and try to seize the TV station to spread news of their uprising.

From this distance, forced to rely on the capitalist media, it's impossible to objectively assess the political make-up of the minority that battered their way into the police station and set light to bus-barricades in the street. It'd be encouraging to think that that minority didn't risk their lives for the chance to shop at Laura Ashley, eat at McDonalds, or wave a plastic flag while watching the changing of the Palace Guard.

Sadly, recent events in Eastern Europe are all too full of instances of 'militant struggles' (including those fought for by working class groups) for thoroughly reactionary ends.

Certainly there will have been a minority of positive anti-capitalist forces at work amongst the golani rioters. How significant they were, we can't as yet say. But our job is to try to identify and support those elements - not simply dismiss the whole affair as a squabble between rival groups of would-be capitalists.

Weaknesses

What is also unclear, is whether those who joined in the attack hoped and expected other sections of the dispossessed and downtrodden, (including the industrial working class), to join them in mounting a serious challenge to NSF rule, or whether theirs was a largely spontaneous reaction to the police attack on their camp. If it was the former, the golani seriously overestimated the level of support they enjoyed. If growing numbers are rapidly concluding that their 'revolution' never really happened, they currently lack the confidence to confront the Salvation Front head-on, and certainly don't agree on what the NSF should be replaced by. As a result, the golani faced first the police truncheons, and then the miners' clubs, alone.

This highlights the two massive weaknesses that crippled the rebellion. Firstly, the 'broad-front' nature of the opposition movement - in which proletarian interests are submerged in a mish-mash of conflicting and contradictory politics. And, secondly, despite the presence of a small number of workers in the golani's ranks, they are clearly detatched from the bulk of the working class, failing to organise around issues of even immediate concern to Romania's poor. The fact that the most visible and militant form of resistance to the regime mounted thus far was - basically - a 'peace camp', is proof of this detachment.

The crushing of the golani revolt won the praise of some sections of the British Left. As well as the predictable Stalinist support for the miners' "speedy response to President Illiescu's call to defend democracy" (Morning Star, June 15), both the Militant Tendency and the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) - to name but two - joined the chorus of approval.

Accepting without question the regime's portrayal of the rioters as being "led by middle class intellectuals and students whose aims is the introduction (sic) of capitalism", the RCP put the riot down to the disaffected jealousy of an intelligensia who had "largely been excluded from the corridors of power" (tns 23 June). Militant - as might be expected - put things more crudely: the 'provocative' violence of the demonstrators, incensed the miners who "showed themselves to be a formidable barrier to capitalist restoration (sic)". "The workers", it explained, "understand the advantages of a planned economy", adding ominously: "They were putting down a counter-revolutionary minority and we'd do exactly the same". (Militant 29 June).

It's worth recalling that both these groups gave enthusiastic support to the Tiannamen Square protests in China last year - although the demands of the Chinese students were equally as class-confused and politically incoherent as the golani's are.

What's disturbed Western capitalist commentators is not so much the catalogue of smashed skulls and broken limbs chalked up by the miners, but by the spectacle of seeing Illiescu encouraging sections of his own working class (those "dirty faced runts" as The Observer described them) to take matters directly into their own hands. Having evoked the power of the working class, Illiescu may in the future be unable to diffuse or control it.

What, then, persuaded the National Salvation Front to take such a risk? The battle of Bucharest seemed to take them completely by surprise. Illiescu's alarm call to the miners was more of a panic gut-reaction than a calculated tactical move. While Illiescu dealt with this eruption of political street violence with relative ease, it was really the last thing he - or the Front - needed.

Divisions

The NSF are beset with problems. There are deep divisions within the Front over the pace and direction of economic change. Since taking power, the NSF has seen productivity in the factories slump alarmingly. There is a growing rift between Illiescu and the Prime Minister Petre Roman, and between army and police chiefs. The miners' action led to the (doubtless temporary) suspension of millions of dollars of investment from the West, which they need urgently.

Illiescu lacks the total support of either the leaders or the ordinary ranks of the police: he blamed the severity of the rioting on their half-hearted response to the initial violence. He since

Miners patrol Bucharest in search of the rioters

switched control of the police to army officials, established a National Guard and replaced the Minister of the Interior. Some analysts are predicting the break up of the NSF under these pressures.

The deployment of the miners as the government's stormtroopers, highlights two things about the Illiescu regime. First, that they have successfully driven a wedge into the Romanian working class, by convincing the miners that their interests are bound up in the survival of the regime. Second, it shows that Illiescu understands where the ultimate power in his society - in any society - lies: in the hands of the working class. As long as that power remains passive, divided and confused about its own real interests, the ruling class (if not Illiescu himself, or the NSF) will survive intact and in control.

In the city of Timisoara, birthplace of 'the revolution', protests sprang up in response to the miners' attacks. In a development typical of the distortion of class alliances endemic in Romania (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe), local army chiefs pledged to defend nervous protestors against any future assault by maurading miners.

What then of the future? The NSF's problems look set to multiply. The ruling class needs to try to stabilise an increasingly volatile situation, probably by moving towards more 'democratic' methods of control, to buy time and passify its liberal-democratic opponents. It could purge a few sacrificial Ceausescu-ites from its own ranks and offer more social reforms too. But its freedom of manoeuvre is limited by economic constraints: the Treasury's coffers are empty.

Austerity

Within days of the miners' return to the coalfields, Illiescu was forced - by the need to unfreeze an EEC trade deal - to publicly criticize the miners' "over-reactions" and "excesses". Since then, Prime Minister Roman has attacked lazy and incompetent workers - including miners - for the productivity losses that the country can barely afford. He's warned that the losses must be made good.

And there, for the regime, is the rub. To turn round Romania's chronically backward, inefficient economy, means railroading through a major austerity package at the expense of the already impoverished Romanian working class. As one Liberal Party spokeswoman understood: "One can not easily ask a miner for his help one day, and then shut down his mine - however unproductive - the next".

With the fall of Ceausescu, the poor's expectations have risen, not declined. Many workers, miners included, will simply be unwilling to suffer further attacks on subsistence living standards, in return for the promise of 'jam tommorow'.

During the 1977 coal strike, 30,000 Romanian miners struck in protest against punative wage-cuts imposed by Ceaucescu after they failed to meet impossibly high production targets. They took the Prime Minster hostage for three days during the dispute.

As the reality of the NSF's reform programme becomes clearer, many of the criss-cross class alliances already under strain in the Romanian 'opposition movement', will snap - and the poor's real class interests come into sharper focus.

If that happens, Illiescu may reget the day he taught the miners how easy it was to impose their will on the streets of Bucharest.●

Rioter amid burning cars outside Bucharest's wrecked police station

ublicanism and the in Ireland

play the communities off against each other. The protestant leaders say 'the catholics complain too much, they have it easy now, they've come a long way and there's no longer any discrimination'. But, the catholics see they have worse standards of housing, worse jobs and worse facilities and they blame their protestant neighbours.

The struggle is more intense in Belfast because that's where the unionists have more at stake. They are better organised, and because there is always the possibility to have an entirely protestant workforce it is easy for them to piss on the catholic minority.

Q: ARE THE FOLLOWING THREE STATEMENTS WHICH ARE ALL COMMONLY HEARD IN ENGLAND REALLY CORRECT OR ARE THEY MERELY MYTHS OF THE LEFT? FIRSTLY, 'THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT IS THE IRA AND SINN FEIN'?

A: It's much more than a myth of the left, it's also a myth of the right. It's very useful for the right to group the IRA and Sinn Fein together and call them the enemy.

Hoods

Similarly it's handy for people in England to forget or ignore the fact that there are many groups in northern Ireland fighting for emancipation but with different goals in mind, and with different methods to hand.

Q: SECONDLY, 'THE IRA AND SINN FEIN ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE OPPOSING THE BRITISH STATE'?

A: There are many people, and groups, opposing not only the British state but also the way our society is at the minute, and for a change in it. The IRA and Sinn Fein say they're fighting to change society, but they are fighting for a society on their terms.

For example, those high up in the IRA and Sinn Fein enjoy enormous privilieges. Also there are massive profits to be made from extortion and protection rackets in northern Ireland. The IRA own many drinking and gambling clubs (which is preying on their own people) and also taxi services.

It's well known that those high up in the IRA enjoy good houses and cars particularly. They are all paid for by the profits of racketeering. We often see the local IRA Brigadier driving through our shitty council estates in his brand new Mercedes Benz.

The only reason why the IRA try to stop 'hoods and gangsters' in catholic communities, is because these 'hoods' are muscling in on the IRA's own business.

In Belfast there are meetings between catholic and protestant paramilitary leaders to, in effect, carve up the city in terms of extortion.

Demise

Until 1987, the INLA was the most significant republican grouping after the IRA. The demise of the INLA was caused by disagreements concerning money. The INLA was at maximumn only 200 people. They split into two groups, the IPLO (Irish People's Liberation Organisation) and the 'Belfast Brigade' which was still known as the INLA. In 1987 they were ripped apart by a feud: the IPLO actually wanted to do some fighting, while the Belfast Brigade were quite content to simply rake in profits from extortion.

Feud

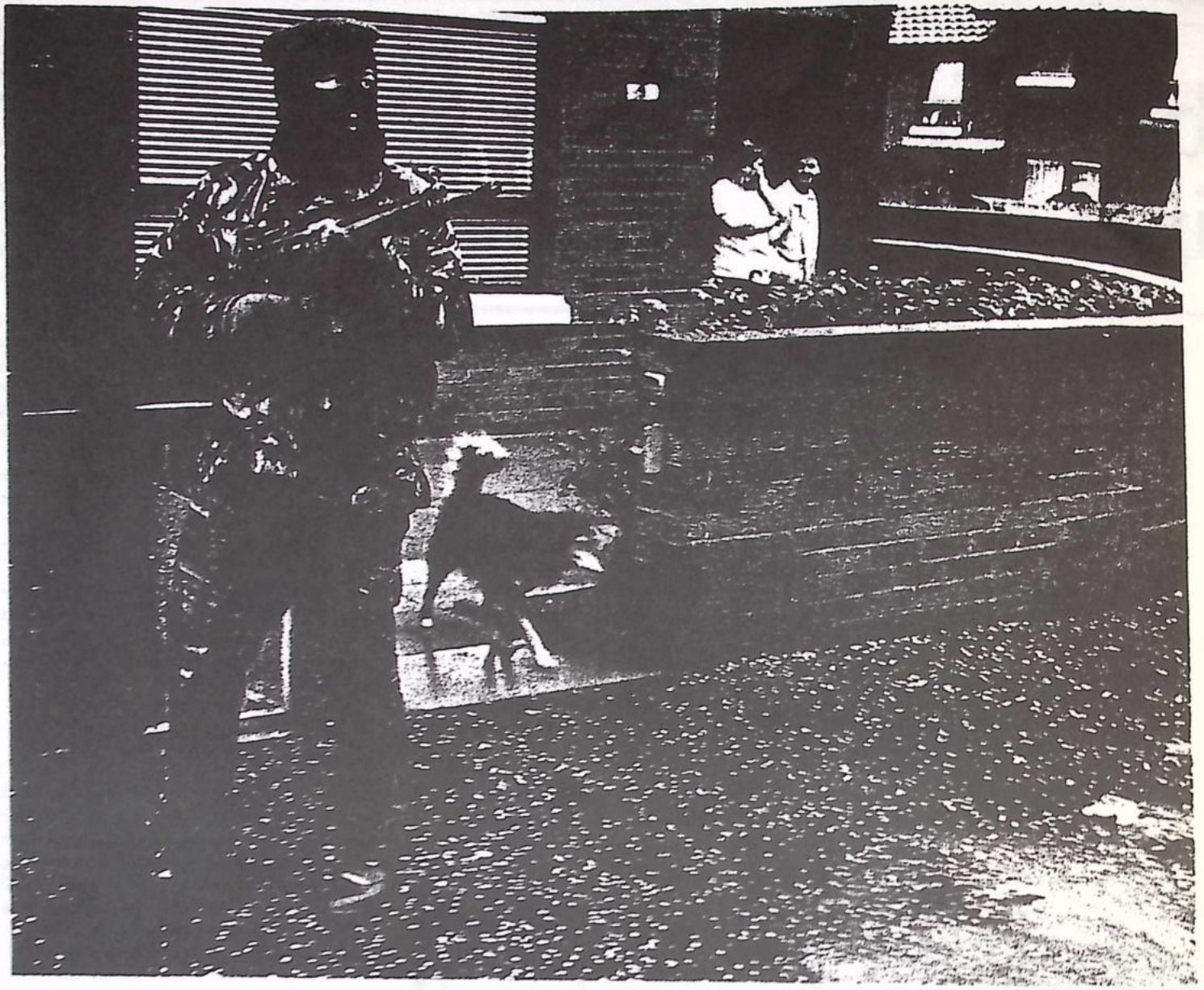
Apart from Belfast, the main centre for the feud was Armagh. There were regular shootings and beatings. They self-destructed as could quite easily happen to the IRA.

Q: LASTLY, 'THE IRA ARE THE ONLY THING STOPPING A SECTARIAN POGROM'?

A: It's in the IRA's interests to maintain this 'myth' because it's a way of recruiting a lot more people. At times of stability and relative peace between the two communities the IRA don't do very well at all. They then revert to their old hardcore of members who try to stir up trouble between the communities.

Catholics always look to the IRA as

Continued over



their last line of defence, because they're seen to be armed and strong, but they're being misled.

Q: IS THERE A NEED FOR ORGANISED CATHOLIC SELF-DEFENCE?

A: There was at the time of NICRA (Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association) because that was more of a sectarian struggle than a class struggle. Now the communities are interacting more, there's a need for class based struggle and self defence.

When the blinds that have been brought down by the middle class, Orange Order and church etc, are lifted slightly, the two communities will see they have the same enemy. Then workers' self defence will be necessary. The IRA are not going to support cross-community struggle, because it's not in their interests to.

Q: ARE THE IRA AND SINN FEIN AS NON-SECTARIAN AND SECULAR AS THEY'VE BEEN PORTRAYED BY THE LEFT AND THEMSELVES?

A: If they're secular and not tied up with the church it's not through their own choice - they'd love to be associated with the catholic church, but they've been 'disassociated'.

As for being non-sectarian, well they may have one or two protestants, but that is it.

That's the main problem with the IRA, they say that they're non-sectarian, but on the ground they threaten people who make links between the two communities. For example, I myself and others have been threatened for being involved in a cross-community 'social group' in Armagh.

School

Also, I went to a mixed school in Armagh, where there was real pressure to only mix with your own community. That was my real education, going to this school and finding out that these people were the same as me. These people lived in some of the shittiest housing in Europe, but they still look down on us and say 'we're better than you'.

Q: DO YOU FEEL THAT SINN FEIN'S NATIONALISM IS A HINDRANCE TO THEIR ABILITY TO OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FACING THE WORKING CLASS?

A: Yes, absolutely. Nationalism is a narrow minded ideology which to some extent runs contrary to the needs and aspirations of a working class. You only have to look at examples of how Sinn Fein has pissed on the demands of the working class (eg refusing to support abortion rights, or to organise rank and file trade union activity to defend workers' struggles).

Sinn Fein will never be a movement of the working classes. They are at the minute, and probably always will be, a section of society encompassing all classes, which does not hold the interests of the working class dear to its heart.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT, WHOSE DEMANDS ARE FOR 'TROOPS OUT NOW' AND 'SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE'?

A: These people see 'troops out' as a cure-all solution to the problems of northern Ireland, when in fact immediate withdrawal will create many more.

It would create a pre-1969 situation with an Orange Order backlash against catholics because of the perceived withdrawal of 'Britishness'. It would strengthen and not weaken the Orange State and protestant supremacy. Thatcher would only withdraw after strengthening the Orange forces of the RUC and UDR.

Enemies

In my own experience the UDR and the RUC are seen as much more of a threat than the British troops. The British troops are seen as a foreign and historic enemy, while the RUC, UDR and UDA are very much the enemy at home.

Of course I want the troops out, but the withdrawal of troops must come with the emancipation of the working class. 'Self-determination for the Irish people'? What does that mean?"

Anthony is a socialist who has been alienated from the republican movement because of his faith in the masses rather than the organisations who try to act on their behalf.

In the early years of the present struggles it was the radical nature of the republican movement and especially the small groups who held sway within it that shook the British state to its core. We must identify and show solid-

arity with the most progressive elements of the movement. Assist our Irish comrades in the building of a strong cross-community all Ireland anarchist movement.

Although it is partition, the Orange state and sectarian politics which divide the Irish working class, the nature of republican resistance is a problem we cannot ignore as revolutionaries.

The IRA and Sinn Fein will undoubtedly try to hold on tight to the reigns of power in the republican movement, just as they try to control all struggle against the British state, in the guise of 'community policing':

Message

"This is a special message for young people - no hi-jackings, no joy riding, no stone throwing at the Brits. If you want to do these things, there are organisations to do this for you", Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein President.

But, they must be challenged. We must not be sycophantic, afraid to criticise: Sinn Fein's politics are rotten to the core, and their right to leadership of the working class must be challenged, just as we deny the legitimacy of loyalist organisations 'representing' the class.

Otherwise the struggle for freedom will go on, well after the present 'troubles' have ended.•

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT was drafted by the ACF's Ireland Commission, based on discussions at our last national conference, and has been endorsed by the rest of the organisation:

"The working class of Ireland is divided and exploited by British structures of imperialism, which are part of a wider Western imperialism. This imperialism has many forms - political, economic, cultural and strategic. In this context it is clearly a myth and a media lie that the Irish war is a religious war. Religion has been used by the British state to divide the Irish working class in order to maintain their interests. We support the class struggle in Ireland - North and South - that is attempting to oppose these divisions, oppressions and exploitations.

The presence of British troops in Ireland is only one aspect of imperialist domination. As in any fight against imperialism, we support the removal of capitalist troops through united internationalist working class action. The removal of troops on any other basis would only occur if the interests of the British and international ruling class were maintained, and such a move would have nothing to offer the Irish working class.

As anarchist communists we see that nationalistic and hierarchical resistance can merely unite a capitalist Ireland. Both the "stages theory" and the idea of "self determination" would lead to such an outcome, neither benefitting the Irish working class, nor advancing the international fight against capitalism and its protectors, nation states. Thus they are an irrelevance to the class struggle, as are the nationalist and elitist organisations that advocate these methods and goals.

It is only through a generalised class struggle - both social and armed - that a world wide anarchist communist society can be envisaged."•

The poll tax flagship heads for the rocks

THEY BADLY NEEDED a clear cut, decisive victory to dent the growing confidence of their opponents. In the end, the government suffered a series of messy, humiliating defeats as the first attempts by local councils in England and Wales to force poll tax non-payers to pay up through the courts ended in chaos and confusion.

The government - both local and national - had hoped a swift series of 'enforcement orders' dished out to the first poll tax defaulters hauled up before the bench, would show (in the full glare of the media spotlights) - the futility of trying to evade payment of the Charge. Instead, they saw the non-payment movement clock up a series of inspiring, confidence-boosting victories.

First in the Isle of Wight and then in South Tyneside, cases collapsed in a morass of bureaucratic incompetence in early June, as the first 'official' estimates of non-payers to be published admitted that - nationally - around a third of those on the Charge register had yet to pay a penny of their first bills.

The same official (under)estimates acknowledged that in some areas the situation was even worse. In most inner-London areas, officials were conceding that around 75% of those obliged to pay has so far ignored all reminders. By the end of April, Camden council in north London had received only 4% of poll tax monies owed. In the Tory-run 'flagship' borough of Wandsworth (with the lowest poll tax level in the country) council officials had sent out an initial 4,800 summonses to defaulters. Greenwich had got in £1.6m, instead of the £5m it expected; Hackney £1m out of £4m; Southwark £1.5m out of £5.2m. In Chelsea, Lambeth and Kensington, poll tax administration is in too much of a mess for their Treasuries even to guess at the levels of non-payment.

In Rotherham, 40% of residents had paid nothing. In Birmingham 50%. In Scotland, where the tax has now been in force for 17 months, total arrears of unpaid poll tax now stand at above £170m, and show no signs of coming down. Such high levels of arrears are putting an enormous strain on council financing: there simply isn't sufficient cash in many authorities' coffers to meet all their own bills. "We have something like a £15 million gap between what we pay out, and what we are getting in", the borough Treasurer for Wigan council explained to the press. "We've already forked out £300,000 on interest payments, on money we borrowed to cover the shortfall. It's costing us £3.50 a minute, 24 hours a day - and our situation is not unusual".

Treasury analysts comfirm that Wigan's experience is, indeed, typical. Council borrowing in April was £900 million higher than in the same month last year - a clear indication of the extent of non-payment local authority's were preparing for.

In Strathclyde region (Britain's biggest authority) £87 million of last year's poll tax remains unpaid. Council officials there estimate that as much as £50 million of that may have to be written off as "bad debts".

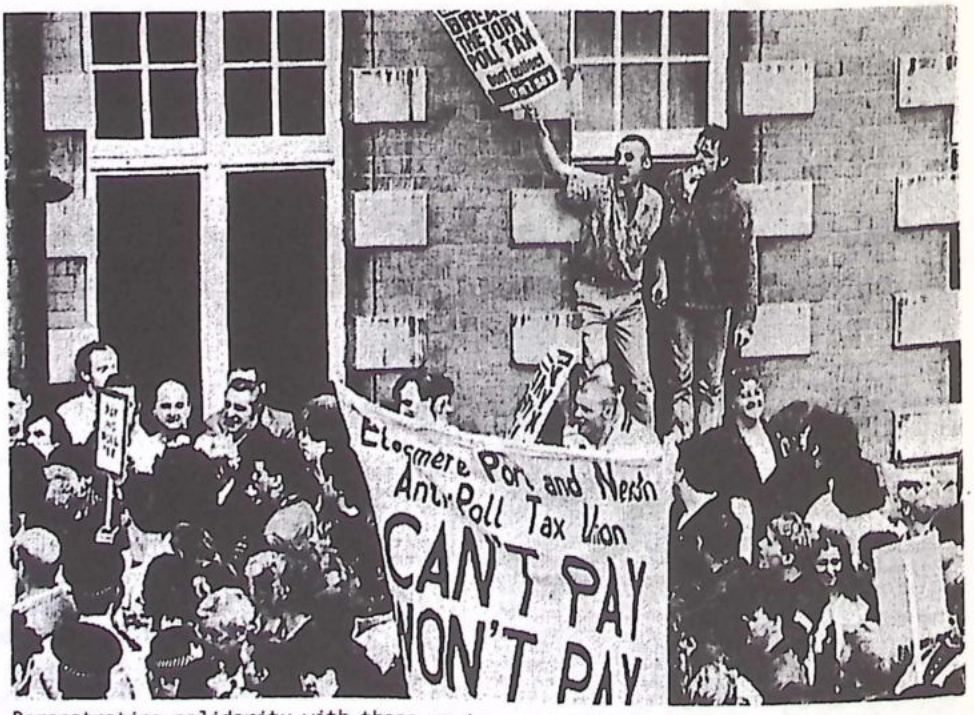
Labour local government spokesman David Blunkett told the BBC evening news on July 17 that Labour councils threatening non-payers were doing "a first-class job in almost impossible circumstances".

Mass non-payment of the poll tax is now an incontestible nationwide fact. A year's experience in Scotland shows that, while the numbers of non-payers may dip a little (as a trickle of court enforcements and wage arrestments take effect), a mass campaign of payment refusal can sustain itself over time. In the current political climate, we were never going to see a majority of the working class joining a movement centred on non-payment. But a significant, sizeable section of our class has proved its determination not to bow to poll tax law. The task before us now, is not so much to convince people of the need for non-payment, but to encourage the mass of non-payers to organise their resistance collectively.

The bureaucratic inertia that has dogged the poll tax from the beginning, is - if anything - worsening as the months go by. "I've described the poll tax as a nightmare", a tired and emotional Birmingham Treasury official explained. "But the poll tax is different... You wake up from a nightmare". Birmingham's council has already prepared to write-off £7m as "uncollectable", admitting that "it could prove much higher". In Labour controlled Birmingham's poll tax nerve centre, they're preparing to send out 250,000 final demands. As office clerks slog through an awesome mountain of unanswered mail, council officials have taken to hiding truckloads of unopened mail-bags in a secret store room, fearing the sight of them "would have an adverse effect on our staff's motivation". Other councils' officials are equally depressed.

Inner-city bureaucrats are also discovering to their cost just how mobile 'their' populations are - making the compiling of accurate poll tax registers impossible. "The Government has no idea of how many changes of address we're supposed to keep us with", complains Islington council leader Margaret Hodge. "99% of the rates were collected. Houses, unlike people, don't do inconsiderate things like moving around". How accurate, then, were her lists of potential payers? "God knows".

Problems with computer systems



Demonstrating solidarity with those up in court, in Warrington in June

custom-designed to administer the tax are rife too. In many authorities, the software in use is unable to accurately log a payment against an individual account, or work out deductions for those on housing benefit or Income Support. The system in Rugby still isn't ready to be used. Manchester City Council admits to having "lost" thousands of names from its records. The result? that many of those who've paid received threatening final demands, as non-payers are overlooked.

Industrial action against the poll tax, while increasing, remains sporadic and, as yet, largely unconnected to the non-payment movement.

Disputes involving poll tax workers have broken out in a number of places including York, Hammersmith, Sunderland, Slough and - most notably - in Greenwich, London. There, 160 housing workers went on all-out indefinite strike, in support of cashiers suspended by the council for refusing to take on poll tax duties. But the strike was never a political anti-poll tax one. The cashiers weren't up in arms over the poll tax, but wanted better terms and conditions for taking on the extra work.

We obviously support such action, but (to coin a phrase) "without illusions".

Efficiently

As one of the strikers wrote in Labour Briefing "the strike could be resolved if Greenwich Council coughed up some more money to collect its poll tax more efficiently". In the end, that's exactly what happened, as NALGO and the council stitched up a compromise deal. While on strike workers distributed leaflets to Greenwich residents (including the 30% who aren't paying), urging them not to cross their picket lines. Now the dispute is settled, those same workers will begin the job of sending out final demands to those non-payers urging them to "cough up".

Turning that sectional dispute into the kind of action that sought to unite those housing workers with the thousands of local non-payers requires a major shift in the political orientation of the action. Attempts to achieve that are made more difficult by the actions of Left-ists who make out we've just witnessed an "anti-poll tax strike".

More encouraging have been the first examples of concerted action against the threat to workers' jobs from poll tax capping. In June, around 1,000 teachers in Barnsley struck for a day in protest at the announcement of the loss of 23 teachers job in the borough due to poll tax cuts. The 'unofficial' strike was in defiance of an NUT ban on any industrial action on the issue. Local teachers have responded to the union's threat to discipline the organisers, by planning a further three one-day strikes. Teachers in Bristol have held a one-day strike too.

Council workers in Haringey - where a £14 million package of cuts threatens over 600 jobs - voted in mid-July for an eight day programme of strike action, and indefinite strike action in selected areas. Haringey NALGO officials immediately called on the council to enter "meaningful talks on the cuts to avoid confrontation".

While the Barnsley, Bristol and Haringey developments are significant, the action being taken and planned is nothing like as widespread or militant as we should now be witnessing. Many council workforces have yet to meet - even in their seperate sections - to discuss the threat to their jobs. The scale of action necessary to seriously challenge the poll tax cuts threat, is in a different league to that we're seeing discussed now. And while the votes at both NALGO and NUT conferences not to sanction industrial action against the poll tax left some workers angry and determined to fight regardless of the union, it left others demobilised and unwilling.

As attempts to beat poll tax capping through the courts fail, and the scale of resultant cuts in services becomes clearer, limited action will certainly spread. But as yet, the industrial wing of poll tax resistance looks set to badly lag behind the community campaign of non-payment.

Elsewhere on the industrial front, the very first wage arrestment orders against Scottish non-payers have been granted against workers in a Dundee sweet factory. Workers at the Keiller plant have held mass meetings to discuss their response. This is against the background of growing unease amongst employers at being drawn into poll tax enforcement. The Engineers Employers' Federation has warned the government that workers seeing their bosses deduct their unpaid poll tax at source could "lead to a serious deterioration in labour relations". The Financial Times too has warned of the "potentially disasterous consequences" of the widespread use of such powers.

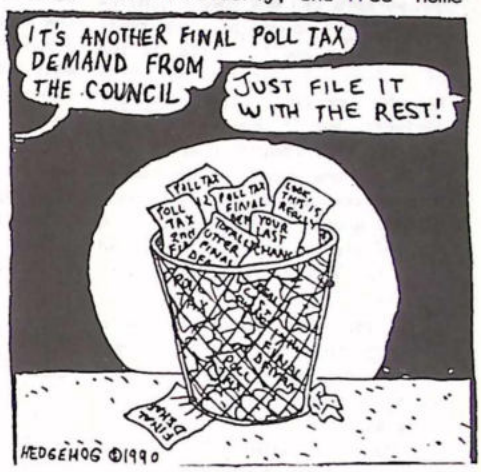
Elections

The May local election results sent a mixture of confusing messages to both Labour and Conservative camps about the impact of the poll tax on voting habits. We've long argued that the poll tax is a means of ensuring local councils destroy their own services in a "battle of the budgets" with their opponents, competing to offer the local electorate the lowest possible Community Charge.

In Wandsworth and elsewhere in London, 'low-spending' Tory councils swept to power in defiance of the national swing towards Labour. But in Bradford, home of the infamous axe-swinging Pickles administration, the Tories were ousted and a Labour council returned.

But if the Tories have yet to totally win the argument that high Community Charge levels are the fault of spend-crazy local councils, Labour officials country-wide have taken full note of the dreaded "London effect".

One of the first statements of the newly-installed Bradford Labour council was to explain it "could not promise to reverse the planned cuts" of the Pickles period. Haringey Labour leader Toby Harris announcing plans to shut day centres for the elderly, end free home



helps, close swimming pools, and chop £1.5m in grants to voluntary bodies, bemoaned his lot: "We have been faced with choices none of us imagined possible", he complains: "Do we close libraries or schools? sports centres or nurseries?". His 'disbelief' at the butchery he is preparing to perform will be of little comfort to those he expects to bear the brunt of his axe-blows.

His colleagues in Derbyshire face similar dilemmas in deciding exactly where to clobber the poor. Faced with imposed budget cuts of £40m it is clear that nothing is safe: not even the agreement of no compulsory redundancies for local teachers - "There is no absolute promise that that cannot change", one official warned.

On a national level, the Government is clearly worried. The day after it was revealed that high levels of non-payment were forcing up government borrowing, the Tories announced plans to shelve their 'care in the community' legislation for two years. If introduced now, the new law would have upped poll tax bills by an average of £50 a year. But poll tax levels look set to rise by around 10% next year anyway, even allowing for the government's expected multi-million cash-handout to local authorities.

All things considered, the Tories' 'flagship' looks like it's heading for the rocks at full steam ahead.•

Striking errors

DUE TO AN unfortunate error on the Letters page of the last issue of Organise!, a section of our 'author's reply' to a letter about the ambulance dispute appeared in the wrong order.

The first eight lines at the top of the third column should have been at the bottom of the third column.

The column breaks would then have read: (from the bottom of column 2) "But it's no use pretending that every single group of workers can and should follow an identical course of industrial action...", and (from the bottom of column 3) "Action by other health workers might affect patients, but if workers asserted their direct control over levels of 'emergency cover' on the wards that risked would be minimised. There's another difference to the kind of dispute strategy we should aruge for with different groups of workers..."

Also, the letter we were replying to was from "The former members of the ACF M4 Corridor Group", and not "former member..." as it appeared.

Our apologies. Since the discovery of these errors, one of the Nottingham Organise! editors has decided they now "wish to spend more time with their family" and has agreed to retire early on health grounds.

Yours suitably purged,
The Eds
Nottingham

Ecology and class

I HAVE A couple of questions about the "Ecology and Class" article in the last issue of Organise!: these basically concern your sources for certain claims.

(1) The German Green Party's support for nuclear power at state level: I am confused about this as I thought they had always firmly oppsed it, indeed that such opposition had been crucial to their growth and support.

(2) "Earth First"s support for AIDS.

(3) Britain's Green Party refusing to back mass non-payment (of the poll tax - Organise!): To quote from a "Briefing for Local Green Parties" handed out at a recent anti-poll tax meeting - "The Green Party... considers non-payment and non-implementation as positive options for those who choose them". Admittedly this can be read in an individualistic way, but it still doesn't bear out your claim.

So on this and the other two points, I'd be interested in your evidence for making these statements.

In the meantime, congratulations on a worthwhile read, which I hope to receive regularly in the future!

Adrian
Essex

AUTHOR'S REPLY: THANKS for your letter. I contended that when in power at State level, the German Green's sanctioned continued construction of a nuclear power plant. That source was an article I read in an old Black Flag a few years ago, but that's from memory, so... On firmer ground (and making the same point) despite gathering support from the squatters movement and having themselves risen through it, Die Grunen, when in power in the West Berlin senate (in coalition with the Social Democrats) sent in 300 police to forcibly evict the large squatted communities in Kreuzberg and Schoenberg. When the squatters (who included many radicals) resisted, Green politicians announced a 'declaration of war' on anarchists and autonomists (Black Flag, 1990).

"Earth First!" advocate higher infant mortality and disease as a solution to overpopulation (sic) since "the only way to control population is to let natural processes do it" (from an article by Miss Ann Thropy in Earth First 1986). The same author wrote the notorious article "Population & AIDS" (Earth First! 1987) which cheer-led epidemics. In the same vein Daniel Conner wrote "Is AIDS the answer to an environmentalists prayer?" (Earth First Yule 1987) which describes the virus as a kind of revenge by Gaia (the Earth as an super-organism).

The Green Party's original stance on the Poll Tax was against 'breaking the law' (stated before and at their last conference), which is by definition against non-payment. It has now changed somewhat to 'support' for individual non-payers. "The Green Party supports all those who themselves choose such means [non-violent civil disobedience]" (my emphasis). This is echoed in your quote from the same document "...for those who choose them". This is allows non-payment as a moral stance for some individuals whose consciences may force them into breaking the law, and no more. Such 'support' is meaningless. It is like supporting strikers as individuals rather than their collective organisation and action.

This is not of course to decry the active non-payment organising by some Green Party grassroots activists or indeed some Labour supporters, but they should listen to what their Party is actually saying. The ACF recognises that all political parties must uphold the law as the basis of their power. We recognise no such right to rule.

The myth of Labour's "socialism"

Labourism, the ideology that holds the Labour Party together, is decaying. This pamphlet explains why, and examines what opportunities will be opened up by the collapse of the Labourist myth.

The role of the revolutionary organisation

Anarchists reject the Leninist model of a "vanguard party" as counter-revolutionary. What then *is* the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain.

Each pamphlet costs 60p (including postage), and both are available from:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

Irish prisoners

NOEL MURRAY AND Marie Murray are anarchists imprisoned 15 years ago for the murder of an Irish policeman. How long is a life sentence? Marie is currently the longest serving female prisoner in the whole of Ireland.

"What is it like on the outside?". Marie Murray put that question to me when I visited her on a cold day last January. The visitors' portakabin, situated in the yard of Mountjoy Jail, has been Marie's only link with the world for 15 long years.

Despite a sense of outrage at having been locked up without hope, she was cheerful and chatty. Her husband, Noel, serving his life sentence in Limerick Jail 150 miles apart, has been able to get an odd lift in a prison van up to see her. Clearly the Murrays are not now seen as a threat to the affluent Irish society which is so evident on Dublin's fashionable streets.

A greeting at the far end of the cabin demanded instant attention. A bouncy, plumpish 23 year old, her rosy cheeks not yet affected by prison's pallor, was confident enough to ask her cousin for a kiss. He had come to see Majella Boland whose innocence is an example of the cruelty which a male dominated state can inflict on a mother and her child.

Majella, who began a life sentence last December, sought an Irish solution to a violent Irish problem. Her husband, Patrick Boland, beat and abused her and sometimes threatened to throw their daughter out of a bedroom window. Paying a friend £120 to give him a scare seemed cheap if it was to bring some respite. But a minder became a murderer and Patrick was shot dead.

Declan Malone (with whom Majella had no kind of relationship) pleaded guilty to murder and got life. But the god-fearing christians of Ireland wanted Majella's life too and she was charged and subsequently found guilty of murder by a jury of six men and six women.

Letters of support will indicate that the outside world has not forgotten them. Please send letters to: Noel Murray, Limerick Jail, Ireland, and Majella Boland/Marie Murray, Mountjoy Jail, North Circular Rd, Dublin, Ireland.

EW
Nottingham

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

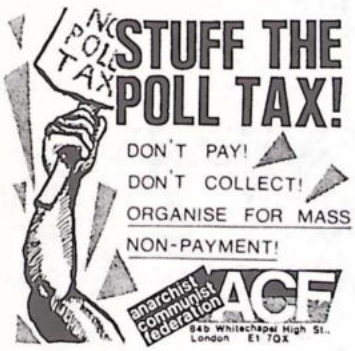
The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives wil always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchist we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.●

THESE AIMS AND principles contain another revised version of 'clause 3' on racism and sexism, following further discussion and debate at the ACF's Spring conference.



ACF anti-poll tax stickers

Bundles of these ACF anti-poll tax stickers available for a donation and SAE from: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

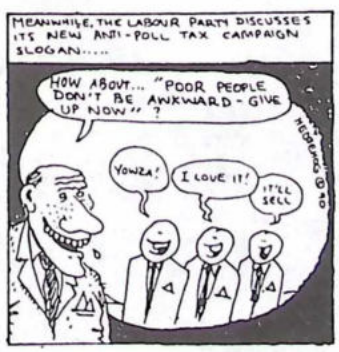
Beating the poll tax

"THE ACF'S BEST pamphlet yet": Merseyside Anarchist Newsletter, June 1990.

Information and analysis of the battle against the poll tax.

Cost: 60p (inc postage)

From: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.



From the Battle of the Boyne, to the Battle against the Bosses

THE TWELFTH OF July saw the 300th anniversary of the (in)famous Battle of the Boyne, with the 6 counties of northern Ireland covered in cardboard King Billys and red, white and blue bunting. The triumphant parades of this 'special' Orangeman's Day were typical of the usual carnival of reaction which the non-Loyalist population has had to suffer for so long.

But the truth behind William of Oranges' victory over James II in 1690 is drowned beneath the noise of the fife bands and the menacing thump of the Lambeg drum, long the musical accompaniment of Loyalist terror. Presented as a victory for religious freedom and Protestant rights over attempts at 'Papist' domination, the reality reads something different.

William, ruler of the United Provinces of Holland, was invited by the leading members of the English Parliment to overthrow King James II, a catholic convert, who by representing the last vestiges of feudalism was holding back the development of the emerging mercantile bourgoise and the power of the politicians. William himself had eyes on the English throne and was well pleased on his landing in England in 1688 that James, with little or no support from even his own aristocracy, did a runner to France without a fight!

However, James was still nominally in power in Ireland, a situation held through his viceroy, the Earl of Tyrconnell. Seeing Ireland as a potential power base and a stepping stone back to England and Scotland, James landed in Ireland (his first visit... and last) with French arms and advisers. The native Irish catholics and 'dissenters' (non-Anglican protestants) saw this as an opportunity to break the domination of English Parliaments over Ireland, so they gave support, not always wholeheartedly, to James.

Religion

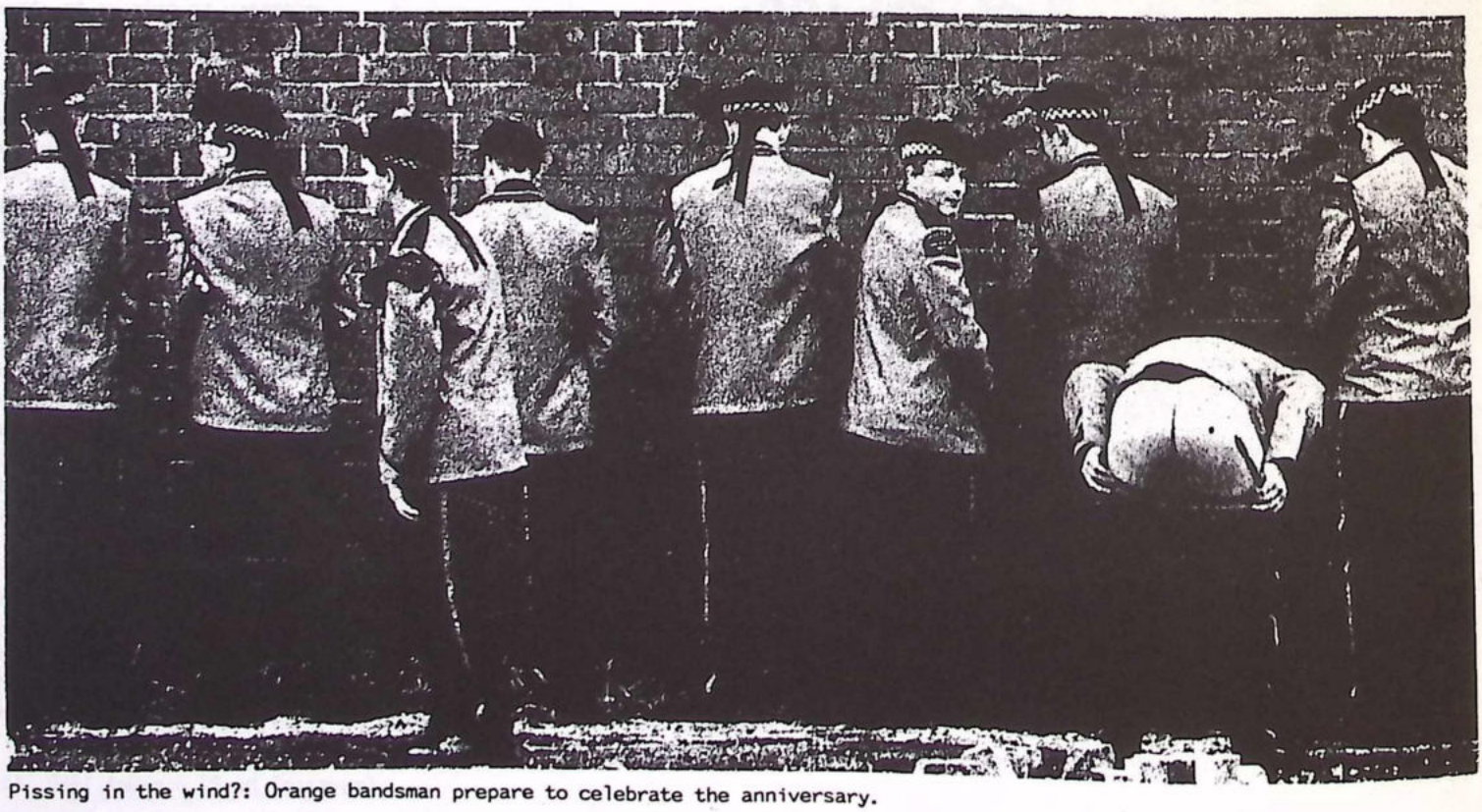
However, at the now legendary Battle of the Boyne (and at several subsequent and more decisive battles), William, having a vastly superior army, defeated James who had to flee once more into exile. In this struggle for power William was supported by the catholic King of Spain and the Pope himself! So much for a crusade against Popery!

These facts very much give the lie to the claim that that was basically a religious war, independent from a real struggle for political power and colonial control. It is yet another example of religion being used by the ruling class as a cover and justification for their power struggles, when questions of strategic and economic power were the real motive force.

Godless

But 1690, along with the 'Siege of Derry' and many other historical episodes, is still being used by the Orange Order to bring together 6 counties protestants of all classes in a celebration of their refusal to 'surrender' to papism, republicanism, and on occasion, 'Godless Communism'. The reality is that for working class protestants, Loyalism is in fact an all consuming ideology which requires their abject surrender to the hegemony - political, social and economic - of their Orange bosses.

It is this domination which must be smashed if the working class of northern Ireland are to win their own 'Battle against the Bosses' and have something more to celebrate than the the victory of one marauding monarch over another.●



Pissing in the wind?: Orange bandsman prepare to celebrate the anniversary.

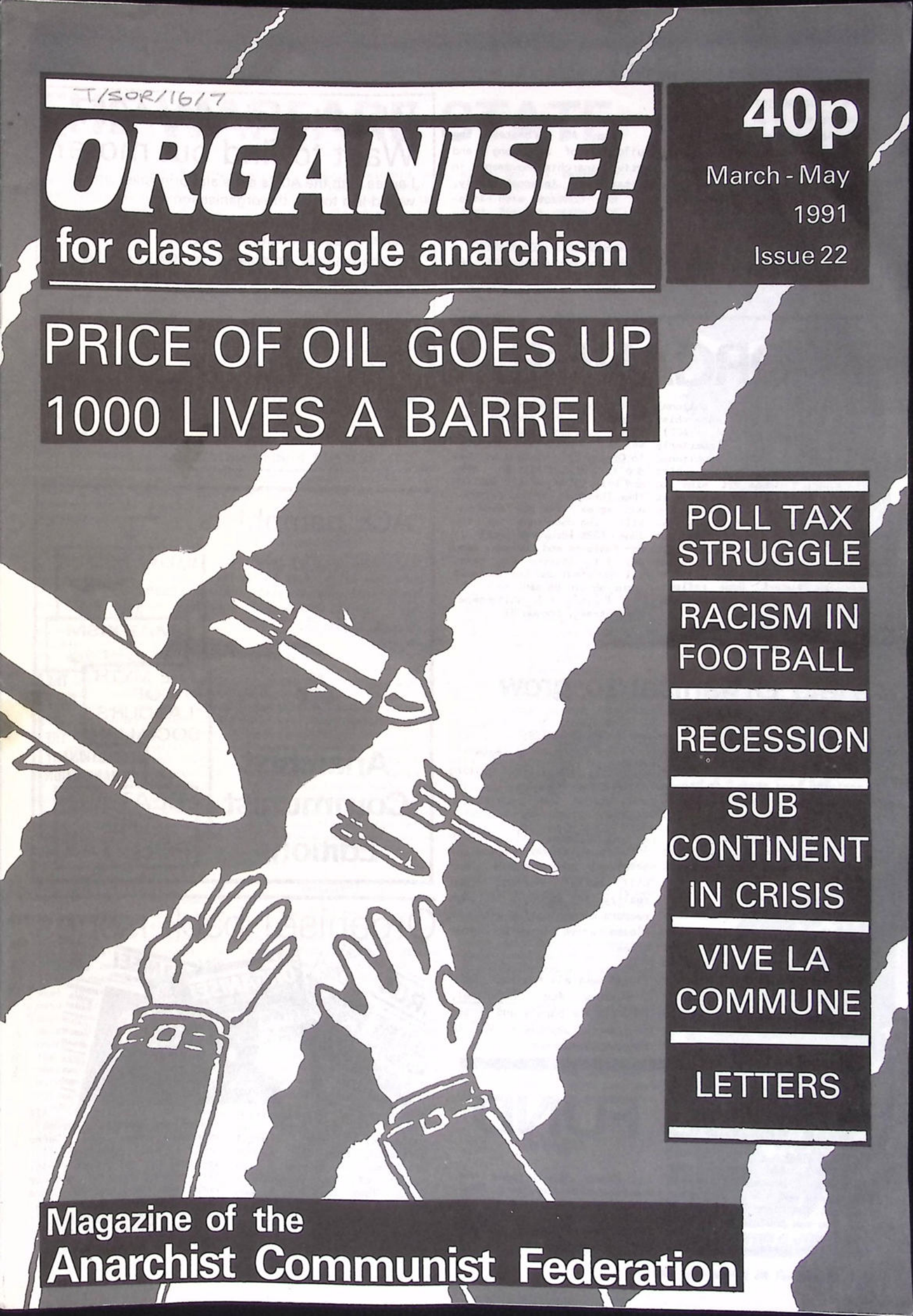
T/SOR/16/7

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

40p
March - May
1991
Issue 22

PRICE OF OIL GOES UP 1000 LIVES A BARREL!



- POLL TAX STRUGGLE
- RACISM IN FOOTBALL
- RECESSION
- SUB CONTINENT IN CRISIS
- VIVE LA COMMUNE
- LETTERS

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class-struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas: Aylesbury, Chesterfield, Coventry, Derry, Essex, Gillingham, Glasgow, Halifax, Leamington Spa, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Northumberland, Nottingham, Oxford, Rugby, Sheffield and Staffordshire.

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally, and has contact with like-minded anarchists in other countries.

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS: Write to: Nottingham ACF, PO Box 97, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 5LQ.

ORGANISE

Organise! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). Organise! is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further. Please feel welcome to contribute articles to Organise! - as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them.(Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). The deadlines for the June 1991 issue are April 13 for features and reviews, anmd May 4 for letters and news. All contributions for the next issue should be sent to ;

ACF,c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.

Help Organise! to grow

WE FEEL THAT Organise! has an important role to play in the growth of revolutionary activity and ideas in these exciting times. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

But we need your support to help keep the furnace burning.

SELL ORGANISE!

Although our sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling Organise! you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

WRITE FOR ORGANISE!

You can help to make Organise! yours by writing letters and articles.

FEEDBACK

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please sent all feedback, contributions for Organise!, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the LONDON address.

PRESS FUND

PRESS FUND

We need money for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. The Press Fund exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of Organise!

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue: 2.50 Bradford; 6.00 Liverpool; 10.00 Gillingham; E.London 50.00; 45.00 Gillingham.

Want to join the ACF? Want to find out more?

I agree with the ACF's aims and principles, and I would like to join the organisation .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

I'm particularly interested in the Anarchist Communist Federation's views on .....

.....

Name: .....

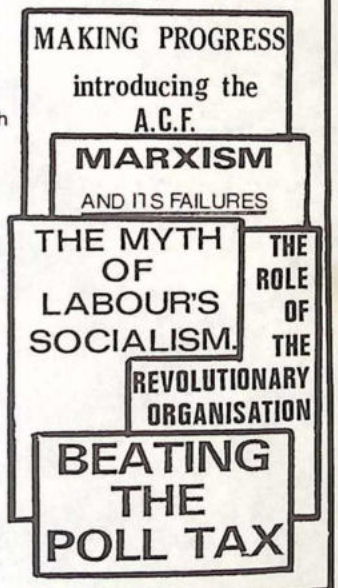
Address: .....

.....

Please tick/fill in as appropriate, and return to: **PO Box 97, West PDO, Nottingham NG7 5LQ.**

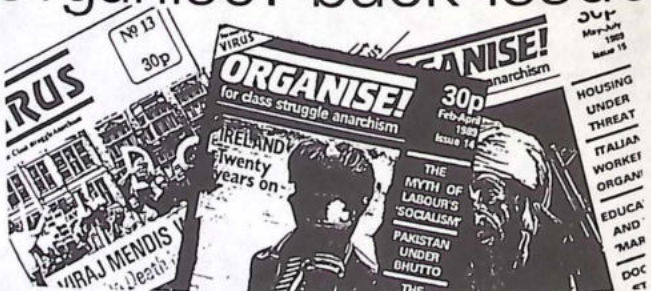
ACE pamphlets

All these exciting pamphlets are available for 60 pence each (including postage) from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.



Anarchist Communist Editions

Organise! back issues



Back issues of Organise!(from issue 14 to issue 21 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner- Virus. They cost 40p & sae each and include:

Organise! 17: Anarchy in the Eastern bloc; Cambodia: what future; Militant and the poll tax. Organise!18: All change in Eastern Europe?; ambulance crews fight; Gerry Healy's death. Organise! 19: The poll tax and prison riots; the myth of Mandela; ecology and class. Organise! 20: Class struggle in Ireland; Romania; Poll tax update; Organise! 21: Gulf war; Russia in crisis; Brixton .

THE WARFARE STATE

THE REASONS For the Western war drive against Saddam Hussein are as much veiled in hypocrisy as Kuwait and Iraq were by the smoke clouds from burning buildings and oilfields. Suddenly, the Iraqi state's massacre of the Kurds gets glaring publicity and support for Iraq- from the U.S., Britain, France, West Germany, the Saudis and the Kuwaitis- which allowed this to happen, is conveniently forgotten.

The carnage itself is veiled in a language that camouflages any notion of maiming and killing, of the slaughter of many human beings. This bloody war is reduced to hi-tech jargon where even the expression " body bags" must now be " human remains pouches". One mildly diverting video war game substitutes for the reality of thousands of dead.

Barrage

Behind the barrage of lies and disinformation and the talk of civilian-friendly precision bombing are the wrecked cities, towns and villages. The same B-52 bombers that twenty years ago reduced vast areas of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to total devastation laid down miles of carpet bombing, smashing supplies for water, fuel and electricity, food distribution and emergency supplies and obliterating those who provided these services and supplies or who lived near them. As the Edinburgh based revolutionary newsheet COUNTER INFORMATION noted : " A B-52 dropping ten tons of bombs from three miles high on a city of 4 million people is carnage and terrorism incarnate. The only sanitary part of the war is the "news". The "low" Western aircraft losses turn out to be the same as those of Korea and Vietnam; 4 per 1,000 missions. The loss rate for Tornados is 10 losses per 1,000."

Indeed the media in the West presented squeaky-clean news coverage on the war in an unprecedented propaganda campaign of distortion. Despite hours of media time devoted to the war, few hard facts ever emerged. The military have a stranglehold on the media, enforced through Strict Media Ground Rules. Point 3 of the Rules states that " You MUST remain with your military escort at all times, until released, and follow their instructions regarding your activities." Point 6 states that " If you are not sure whether an action you will take will violate a ground rule, consult your escort officer prior to taking that action". As David Feingold of Cable News Network stated:" The rules are there and the military run the operation. We are used as conduits of information and disinformation."

Illusions

We do not have any illusions in the impartiality of the media. They are there to fool us, to lie to and about us, to whip up nationalism, racism and chauvinism, and to attack any act of working class resistance. What is distinctive about this war was that it was the most heavily censored in recent history. Any on-the-spot news was vetted by British,American and Saudi censors, as laid down at briefings given to the media by the Ministry of Defence on 3rd and 7th January. Beyond this were sanctions threatened by the military against media access. A Ministry of Defence mouthpiece warned:" We would have to think hard about allowing any reporters to accompany our troops if their editor was carrying reports which jeopardised security." These restrictions, and the complete blackout of news coverage of the ground war were not there to protect the military in the Gulf. They were there to maintain the cloud of ignorance at home, to maintain "morale" so that no serious anti-war movement grew back home. The U.S. have learnt their lesson from Vietnam.The heavily televised carnage helped give birth to a powerful anti-war movement both in the United States and in Europe. This time images of napalmed villages, amputated limbs, and piles of incinerated bodies were as much as possible excluded from the screen.

Money

The U.S. and its allies have tried to make out that the world is united with them against Iraq. They have dished out phenomenal amounts of money to sweeten and pay off any objectors. The U.S.S.R. received $4 billion dollars, the bill to be footed by the oil sheikhs. Egypt's foreign debt of $14 billion would be forgotten if it opted for the allied camp. Syria was given the go-ahead to move forward in the Lebanon and to begin exterminating any factions opposed to it, with the collusion of both Israel and the U.S., and a billion dollars worth of American arms was promised.

President Assad of Syria has many striking resemblances to Saddam. Like Saddam, he is a Ba'athist, like Saddam he rules his country in a brutal way, grinding down the working class and the peasantry. Up until this war, the Syrian state was pilloried by the West for its organising and financing of "international terrorism". Cast your mind back. Whilst the Syrian regime was receiving the treatment the Hussein clique is now getting, a U.S. hostage returned from Iran, held up a sign saying " Buy Iraqi War Bonds". The U.S. assisted Iraq in the war against Iran, its Navy blasting Iranian planes and ships, whilst satellite information on Iranian military movements was readily passed on to Iraq. Less than 4 years ago , the frigate USS Stark was hit by an Iraqi Exocet with the loss of 37 lives, during the Iran-Iraq war. This was conveniently overlooked by the U.S. administration, and benignly dismissed as a mistake.

Cold War

As we forecast in an article in ORGANISE! 18, the end of the Cold War meant that the Western capitalist states would be looking around for a new enemy and they have found it in the shape of the Saddam regime in particular, and Islamic fundamentalism in general. As we said:" The USA and her European allies have for years poured enormous quantities of capital into the arms industries under this pretext"(the Cold War-eds.)" It is difficult to imagine these multinationals taking kindly to a cut in this expenditure, and indeed most Western governments will be loath to cut back their armed forces, who after all are the guardians of the state".

The attack on the Saddam regime has a precedent in the overthrow of Noriega of Panama last year. He too was an accomplice of the U.S. As Director of the C.I.A., Bush had many meetings with Noriega, which involved not only military matters but drug trafficking.

Now it was the turn of Saddam, another unreliable ally of the U.S.. Last May, the top-level advisory body to Bush, the National Security Council, pinpointed the Hussein regime as the best heirs to the Warsaw Pact as the Enemy, so that military spending could continue.

Strength

A week before the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam was advised by the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq that the United States had "no opinion on your border

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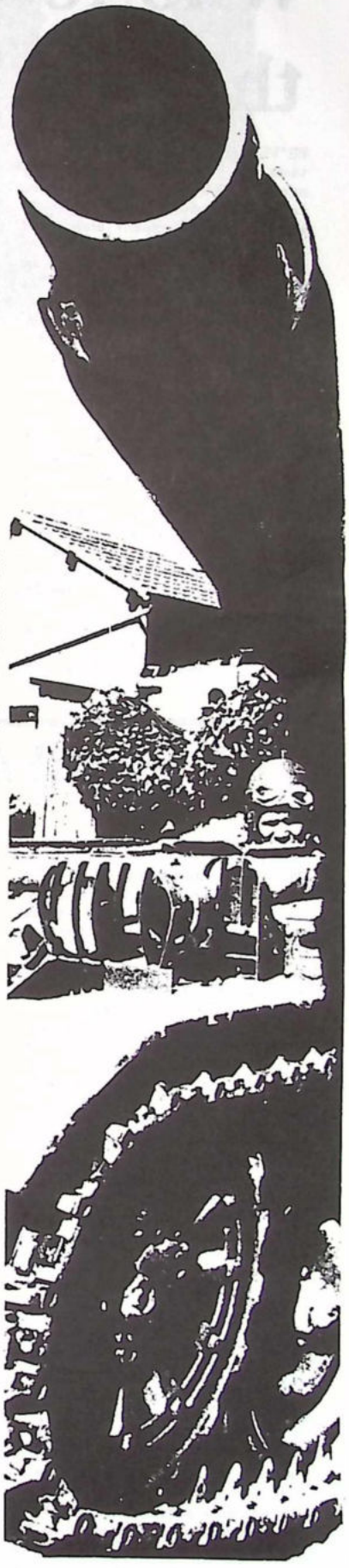


BOSSES CRISIS: Who foots the bill?

WE'VE HEARD IT all before: time to tighten the belts again. The economy is going into recession which means massive unemployment and lower living standards. But of course not everyone will be affected. The rich will as always maintain their privileges and demand that the working class makes the sacrifices.

Industrial production has fallen steadily over the past few months and is now over 3% below that of November 1989. Unemployment has been going in the opposite direction, reaching 1.84 million, over 6% of the workforce, in February. This figure would be even higher if the Tories hadn't changed the way of measuring unemployment eg. not counting 16-18 year olds who are on YTS or other training schemes. Inflation is the highest it's been for years: over 9%. The Confederation of British Industry has even gloomier predictions for the future with recession hitting all sectors of the economy, including the once buoyant service and building industries in the south-east. If the bosses' organisation predicts bad news then it must be bad!

Having joined the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, the government is going to have fewer options since it cannot lower the value of the pound to encourage exports. But in any case, all the solutions proposed by any of the political parties will hit the working class and not the rich. People will lose their jobs or those in jobs will have to work harder and accept lower wage increases in order to make their products more 'competitive'. The Gulf War, with its enormous waste of resources, is certain to lead to higher taxes and cuts in spending on the NHS (except

People accepted the recession of the early 80s as necessary. They believed Thatcher when she said there was 'no alternative' in order to get the economy going again. On the surface, events proved her correct with a lowering of the inflation rate and a drop in unemployment levels.

Now we can see the Thatcher 'boom' for the sham that it was. Much of the lowering of the unemployment rate was due to a massaging of the figures, hiding large groups of unemployed from public view. Unemployment never really improved much in Northern Ireland or the North of England. Jobs might have opened up in the south-east but workers couldn't afford the housing and were forced to commute great distances or stay in cramped accommodation. Consumer spending was financed largely by credit. People believed in the boom so they went on a spending spree with their credit cards and bank loans to help them obtain the material possessions that seemed so necessary in Thatcher's world.

The expansion of the economy, however, was built on shifting sand which has now shifted well away. Output in manufacturing has been declining since the late 1970s in any case. Expansion in the 80s was in the banking, retail and building industries which cannot last on their own if nothing is actually being produced. Consumer spending went on imported manufactured goods which caused a huge balance of payments deficit. Credit spending cannot go on forever. At some point the debts have to be paid and people find themselves in a tight situation with many losing their homes.

Sacrifice

Once again it's a fuck-up, with the working class left to pick up the pieces of a system that is continually having crises. The rich sit tight, hoping that workers will work hard, accept job losses, wage cuts and fewer social services. Then when their profits pick up they might give a few crumbs to the workers.

We mustn't fall for the same old shit. Workers made sacrifices in the 80s and believed the rubbish about it being necessary. This cannot happen again. Capitalism is never going to give us a decent life. It's time to get rid of a system that is continually demanding sacrifices while a few are sitting pretty.

THE WARFARE STATE

Cont.from page 3

conflicts with Kuwait". Like Noriega, Saddam had to go. The Iraqi state's own regional interests were now clashing with those of the Western powers. Iraq had fulfilled its role in stopping the Iranian fundamentalist threat in its tracks. Now it was to be inveigled into a confrontation.

The same week that the U.S. Ambassador spoke to the Iraqis, General Schwarzkopf and his top brass planned an exercise that exactly simulated an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Moslems

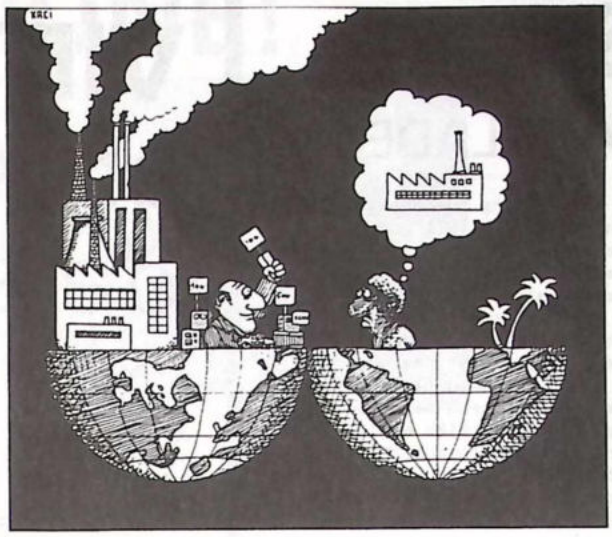
For its part, the U.S.S.R. is terrified of the unrest spreading to it own territories where Moslems are in a majority. It sees the spectre of unrest among the Arab, Iranian and Turkish masses materialising throughout the Near and Middle East. Its own influence in the Gulf area, carried on previously through its former client Iraq, is sorely jeopardised. The U.S. and its allies threaten a permanent military presence in the region. The money provided by the West have kept the Soviet bureaucrats quiet so far, but the danger of American supremacy and power struggles in the leadership may change all of this. For its part, the Iranian state for many of the same reasons colluded with the U.S.S.R. to limit the allied war offensive.

Revolutionaries

Mass movements against the war emerged throughout the world, from the Maghreb countries of North Africa to Malaysia, from Germany to Italy. But many anti-war movements were dominated by the Church(with its fundamentalist counterparts in Moslem countries), the social-democrats,including Labour, with their call for sanctions, and the Trotskyists, with their call for support for the Iraqi regime. As revolutionaries and anarchist communists we didn't take sides in this conflict. Taking sides means supporting the interests of capitalists against the working class. The only side we take is that of the working class in its fight to dump the bosses, of any nationality, off its back.

WORLD TRADE

a coming crisis



ALONGSIDE THE IMF and the World Bank there is another major world economic institution- GATT - the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, set up by the major industrial nations 43 years ago to supervise part of the world economy. These nations saw a major cause of war in `economic disorder', an effect of trade wars whose basic weapons were tariff barriers.

In one very small sense GATT has helped world trade but being US dominated and served by other `big' nations it has served their interests primarily. Over seven rounds of talks the industrialised nations have freed what they wished and protected what they wanted. Textiles, steel, motor industries have been protected. Now agriculture and services are threatening to split world trade into three sectors.

Debts

Firstly, the US along with the rest of the Americas are moving closer together. The US now has free trade agreements with Mexico and Canada. Central and South America need to export to clear huge debts, much of it to the US and others. The US wants to end EEC farm subsidies and to obtain freedom for its own services sector. The US trade deficit would be eased by Latin America being able to trade again. Increased free trade and an end to EEC farm subsidies would help American farmers and increase the market for American manufactured goods. The US also hopes to add to its $90 billion services exports by recovering some of the $60 billion lost to piracy of its `intellectual property' - its ideas, inventions, innovations, information, science and technology.

Plans

The second sector is the EC, parts of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries. Here the Common Agricultural Policy is the problem. The EEC has a huge farming lobby which will only put up with a 30% cut in subsidies. The US wants a 90% cut. Plans have been discussed to cut back on the huge industrial farms consuming ton after ton of chemical fertilizers and instead to support smaller farms and poorer rural communities. This would help cut back on the huge surpluses which are then dumped abroad destroying other farming communities. Agriculture, however, accounts for only 5% of EEC exports, services are another 25%. The UK earns 60% of its Gross National Product through services. The greater European sector would like easier access to other markets for services and manufactures.

Japan, the Pacific and Asia, forms the third sector with its own interests in manufacture and technological exports. This third sector has to battle against barriers against its own specialist exports.

Blackmail

Beneath these three economic sectors lies the South, the Third World, which by means of all forms of restrictions is being pushed further from survival. Non-Tariff Barriers like the Multi-Fibre Agreement, quotas, `imposed' voluntary restraints, blackmail and threats are endangering the industry and agriculture of the Poor World.

Beyond the debts we all know about there are other dangers - the sub-Saharan belt of Africa faces famine yet again. The GATT talks threaten to place further bills on their plate - for `intellectual property', and also the colonisation of financial sectors by big, well-supported Western Banks and Corporations. Thus, their economies will be further controlled and more precarious.

Free trade is only free for the rich and powerful who force others to buy their products, preventing poor countires from becoming less dependent on western imports. Any agreement which is reached by GATT will only succeed in furthering the domination of the west over the Third World. The ruling class in Third World countries will then impose more hardships on their working class. Poor farmers will be unable to survive when western grain is sold at low prices. Workers will be forced to take wage cuts and work harder in order to make their products `competitive' with those of the west. The Gulf War further endangers poor countries by raising oil prices and disrupting trade routes. Economic crisis will hurt only the weak, the economically vulnerable, the working class.

SUB-CONTINENT IN CRISIS

PAKISTAN

THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT has not lasted long. The so-called People's Party has, as always, involved itself in too-open corruption and allowed the ultra-reactionaries to take power again. By throwing away the good will she could have found in those further impoverished by the right, and following the usual road of jobs, power and profit for the boys, she has shown how all of Pakistani party politics is nothing but exploitation. The `damn beards' (mosques) and `chocolate Caesars' (army) are back in power. Drug barons are now entering Parliament on the side of the right. Unable to impose their influence upon Afghanistan the military now have plans for Kashmir. They have taken a more hawkish line on Kashmiri `liberation', training fighters and arming them. A muslim Kashmir breaking away from Indian control could be easy to control and profit from.

INDIA

Great changes have been taking place in India. Rajiv Gandhi began the process of walking India into a regional sub-Imperialist power:-

- the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka, supposedly protecting Tamils and supporting the government, made the north a colony of the rupee and Indian goods;
- Nepal blockaded to ensure Indian goods getting preferential treatment;
- interference in Sikkim and the Maldives.

Privilege

The caste system is still fully in force even though the new government, attempted to redistribute educational privilege to lower castes. High-caste youths committed suicide in protest and `despair'

Communalism has returned with a vengeance. The BJP and VHP have orchestrated all Sikhs are seen as outsiders or foreign invaders. Many have been murdered for their politics, with police leading the way at times. Much of this has surrounded a mosque in Ayodhya which is said to be Rama's birthplace.

India's capitalist class marches on-the caste system and religious and cultural chauvinism keeps the poor classes and lower castes confused and controlled-capital makes its deals with transnationals, using their technology and the poor of the tribal and pre-capitalist areas as ultra-cheap labour to produce goods for export.

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ASIA

BANGLADESH

Following the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 power was concentrated in the hands of the local bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic class. The `Father of the Nation` Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League presided over the creation of this extended class. This was done by three major means: ripping off foreign aid, nationalising Pakistani holdings and alliances with foreign investors,like the British-owned tea plantations. Socialist rhetoric went hand in hand with repression, resulting in the creation of a one-party system in 1975 and the green light for foreign investment by multi-nationals to exploit the population.

Colonel Abu Tahir led a revolt by sections of the military in 1975 against the regime, talking about the creation of soviets amongst the soldiers. Zia Ur Rahman removed the left-progressives and took power. Tahir was hanged.

General Ershad came to power in 1982 and continued the same class rule. Huge quantities of aid have poured in- 60% of the budget was spent on the army, most aid was simply stolen by the rich. Finally Ershad's brutality and corruption forced the opposition to unite and Ershad has been abandoned by his military backers. The opposition comprises forces controlled by the bourgeoisie in the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League, the right and left wings of Bangladeshi capital. There is a small revolutionary left, marxist, maoist, etc, but these forces are too small and authoritarian to make a real change for a poor, desperate and ravaged people.

Asia's problems are being overshadowed at present by the huge media event called the Gulf War. But soon those problems will have to be . noticed again. The forces of capital keep the continent in a vice-like grip - notwithstanding the region's leftists. But those Marxists, Leninists and Maoists of South Asia have not found any answer at all, except taking power and returning to the world economy. Going back to capital is no answer. South Asia's only solution is a world solution, the destruction of capital and its agents on a world scale.

VIETNAM — an American defeat

Deformed children of Vietnamese victims of 'Agent Orange'

Introduction

THE STORY OF Vietnam is similar to that of many other Third World countries. The difference is that the USA launched a full-scale war on the country, resulting in world-wide protests and eventual defeat for the US. Journalists and politicians are quick to deny any similarities between the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. For obvious reasons they did not want to see a large anti-war movement or a US defeat. But looking at the history of the war, we can see that though the details are different, the basic cause of the two wars is the same: the need for western capitalism to assert its economic and political domination over rival capitalisms.

History of the War

Vietnam became a French colony in 1870 and its early colonial history followed a typical pattern:exploitation of the land and its people for the benefit of the French. Opposition began very early with a working class developing around Hanoi and Saigon. There were many strikes and uprisings in the first part of the 20th century. As happened in many other Third World countries, the opposition movement became dominated by groups of intellectuals who had been influenced by western revolutionary ideas while studying or working in France.

Ho Chi Minh was the main founder of the Vietnamese Communist Party and was the leading figure from World War II through to the victory over the Americans. He established the Viet Minh (Vietnam Liberation Movement) during World War II in order to fight the Japanese occupation. The Viet Minh took control in Hanoi with only 1000 men. Elections were held in 1946 in the Chinese-controlled north in which the Viet Minh won a big victory. They assumed that their government would be recognized by the Allies.

The Viet Minh were very much a vanguard organisation. The mass of the people, mostly peasants were not directly involved in the formation of the post-war society. Ho Chi Minh bragged,

"When the August Revolution took place there were about 5,000 Party members, including those in jail. Less than 5,000 Party members have thus organised and led the uprisings of twenty-four million fellow-countrymen."

Meanwhile the British occupied the southern part of the country. The British, under the leadership of General Gracey wanted to see the return of French rule to the country. They invited the French back and gave them free rein to begin to reconquer the country. The French promised Ho Chi Minh that he could have a free state within the French union which he was willing to accept. But once the French felt strong enough, they went back on their promise. The war lasted from 1946 to 1954. The French lost.

US INVOLVEMENT

After World War II the US gradually replaced Britain as the main imperialist power in the Pacific and South-east Asia. The US had first supported the Viet Minh. But they soon came to realise that their interests were better served by the French puppet regime. When the French pulled out of the south, the Americans moved in. The motivation for this was clearly not a desire to defend "freedom" or "democracy". In 1954, before there was a need to assuage public opinion, a leading American magazine, US News and World Report, could write the callous truth,

"One of the world's richest areas is open to the winner in Indochina. That's behind the growing concern. Tin, rubber, rice, key strategic materials are what the war is all about. The US sees it as a place to hold at any cost."

The Geneva agreements, drawn up to arrange the end of war settlement temporarily divided Viet Nam in two. Elections were to be held in 1956 to reunify the country. The US and the government they had set up in South Vietnam refused to sign the agreement. Elections were never held and the country remained divided. President Eisenhower's memoirs explain why the US refused to accept the Geneva agreements. He writes,

"I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of fighting, possibly 80% of the popula-

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VIVE LA COMMUNE!

SEVENTY YEARS AGO the Communist government led by Lenin and Trotsky introduced their New Economic Policy, a measure which started a free market in agriculture and sections of industry. Today, Gorbachov and his supporters are once again trying to establish a latter day variant; the free market is celebrated after decades of the command economy. Always anxious to base new moves on the basis of Marxist-Leninist precedence, we can expect the Kremlin to highlight the anniversary of the NEP with banquets and other celebrations.

What will not be celebrated, we can be sure, is the single event that made Lenin's NEP so urgent: the uprising by soldiers, sailors and civilians at the Soviet naval base at Kronstadt. 1991 is also the anniversary of the Paris Commune which took place in 1871, fifty years before Kronstadt. This article will examine some of the issues involved in these two commune movements and consider the implications of the construction of anarchist communist societies.

Both the Kronstadt and Paris Communes share some interesting features and tell us a great deal about the states which drowned them both in blood after only a few weeks of existence.

Inspiration

The Paris Commune provided revolutionaries with an example of the possibilities inherent in spontaneous popular self-activity. Though defeated, it inspired anarchists, including Bakunin, who claimed it as their own. Even Marx, who had hitherto emphasised the necessity of "political" ie parliamentary struggle, temporarily adopted an almost libertarian position on the Commune. The Communards, he declared lyrically, "have stormed heaven" and, though careful not to abandon the concept of proletarian dictatorship, Marx and Engels identified that dictatorship with the self-activity of the masses that the Commune brought about.

Lenin, ironically, was for a brief period before the October revolution enthusiastic about the Paris Commune, advocating the creation in Russia of the :Commune State". However, Marx's, Lenin's and Engel's libertarianism were extremely temporary. Lenin in particular soon abandoned the superficial libertarianism of his "State and Revolution" and imposed an iron dictatorship of the Party and Cheka (secret police). Having praised the Paris Commune for its libertarian self-activity, he subsequently crushed Russia's home-grown variant: Kronstadt.

Example

What did the Paris Commune acnieve? Firstly it created a popular army from the ranks of disaffected government soldiers and the armed populace of Paris. Though ultimately defeated by the forces of the state, it fought valiantly from street to street until the final surrender. militarily, the Commune made the strategic blunder of awaiting the government attack on Paris. Had it met the invading army some way outside Paris the outcome might have been very different. But, as a model of military organisation, the Commune gave us the people's or workers' militia as an alternative to the standing army which acts as guardians of our oppressors.

On the social level the commune carried out a number of reforms. It was extremely egalitarian, fixing a modest upper limit on earnings for servants of the Commune. Those employers who had fled Paris were expropriated and the workshops were run by the workers. This latter development was of crucial importance since it demonstrated the feasibility of ordinary working people taking control of production themselves. Similarily, the question of distribution was placed in the hands of the Paris masses. In addition, whereas bourgeois "democracy" effectively removes any decision-making from the people, the Commune destroyed political hierarchy and initiated a system of delegate democracy. Delegate democracy gave the workers a direct say in the administration of their everyday lives by which elected delegates were mandated to carry out their wishes and were subject to dismissal should they fail to do so.

The Commune in its day to day activity carried out a number of changes which stemmed from their everyday oppression. For example, night work was abolished for the bakers of Paris. The Parisians would have to wait for their bread! Pawn shops, which were seen as exploitative, were closed down and the church which had played the role of ideological oppressor of the masses was disestablished, its property socialised and its involvement in education terminated.

These measures, though inadequate from an anarchist communist perspective, were all part of a thoroughly progressive and anticapitalist popular social experiment. Anarchists would today perhaps point out limitations of the Commune, for example the continuation of the wages system and the introduction of the cooperative as an alternative to private capitalism. However, had the Commune not fallen and had the model been adopted elsewhere in France (and abroad), a more thorough-going federation of communes might have arisen to replace the nation-state.

Last Gasp

The Paris Commune arose in response to a conservative bourgeois capitalist state, determined to maintain its power in a period of war. The Kronstadt Commune, in contrast, arose at the end of a period of civil war. But again, it was the libertarian expression of revolutionaries exasperated by the activities of a dictatorial state. The Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 had been carried out in the name of the soviets or workers councils which had sprung up spontaneously earlier in the year. The bolsheviks very quickly created a highly authoritarian police state which by early 1921 had abolished virtually all political activity except that of themselves.

The period from October 1917 to 1921 had been one of continual civil war which had sapped the morale of even the state's most enthusiastic supporters. However, rather than harness popular anti-capitalist feeling, the government strove to harness it within its own ideological and organisational straightjacket. It was against this system that the Kronstadt sailors ("the flower of the revolution", according to Trotsky) rose up. The Bolsheviks brought into being a dictatorship which extorted produce from the peasants at gunpoint. which enslaved workers under a hierarchy of political commisars and which granted privileges of extra food rations and accommodation to Communist Party members. The whole perverted system of restrictions and state corruption (there were over 50 different levels of food allocation, depending on rank) was documented by Emma Goldman in volume two of her autobiography. Incidently, this is now cheaply available from Freedom books and should be read by anyone interested in the "communism" of the period.

It was in the Baltic fleet that the original ideals of the closing months of 1917 were retained in their strongest form. Despite attempts to condemn the Kronstadters as Whites or backward peasants or worse, all of which have since been shown to be false, there is no doubt that they wanted a libertarian society controlled by the working class through their own assemblies. At the naval base and on the ships the sailors held mass meetings to formulate their demands. These were summed up most clearly in the :Petropavlovsk revolution".

Soviets

Far from being counterrevolutionary, the demands of the Kronstadt Commune continued a tradition that went back at least to 1905 when Russian workers first brought about the reality of the soviet. In fact, the first demand called for "immediate new elections to the soviets" which had by then become mere rubber stamps of the government bureaucracy, being totally devoid of any independent life whatsoever.

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FIGHTING THE POLL TAX:
NEWS FROM LEEDS

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE describes the struggle against the poll tax at a local level,but the lessons to be learnt from it can be applied nationally.ORGANISE! eds.

THE COUNCIL FIGURES for non-payment of the poll tax in Leeds at the end of 1990 show 10% of the adult population have paid nothing at all; and a further 10% are 5 or more months in arrears. Of course the real figure is higher because this does not take into account those people not registered at all. Clearly there's still more than 100,000 people in Leeds still not paying.

During the last three months of 1990 the council began taking to court the non-payers to obtain liability orders against them. In all over 28,500 people (5% of the total adult population) were summonsed to court. Of these 1415 people actually turned up and had their cases heard in court. All but a handful lost. Of the rest 3435 paid before the court hearing and hence the summons was dropped. At court the massive number of non-attenders was dealt with at the end of the day, with the magistrate granting thousands of liabilities in a few seconds. Thus the council got over 25,000 liability orders. But this is only the first stage in enforcing the poll tax and the figures show the majority of non-payers are not intimidated by the council threats.

Given that there were 18 court days set aside for poll tax cases, lasting for a total of 164 hours, then the average case of those attending lasted about 7 minutes. Interestingly this also shows the potential profit for the court itself. Each liability order granted was charged thirty pounds court costs. That's 750,000 pounds for 164 hours work. But is anyone going to pay it?

This court system looks set to continue in the same fashion throughout the next three months as well. Another 20 days in court have already been set aside by the council. A bonus for them is that the numbers turning up is expected to reduce dramatically. On the first few days the turn out of those summonsed was over 20%, this then fell steadily. It meant the council was able to increase the number summonsed from a few hundred to a few thousand at a time. By now most people probably know someone in the city who has been to court, and have been told it's a waste of time turning up.

The council's next step was to send a series of threatening letters saying "Pay now or else". The threat of using bailiffs was Leed's Labour council's chosen method of enforcing the tax. Only a few forms were sent out asking for details of where you work. Hence arrestment of wages or income support is less likely. But the council has only ten bailiffs of its own and two professional firms working for it. They cannot possibly visit all 100,000 non-payers even without us physically preventing them.

FIGHTING THE COURT CASES

For the last three months of last year the major focus for the organised anti-poll tax movement was around the court cases. There are about forty local groups linked together within the Leeds Federation of anti-poll tax groups. Also in it are about ten workplace groups but up till now these have been less active. A campaign of canvassing, leafletting and flypostering across the city was done where emphasis was put on practical information: telling people not to panic, that the court case was a civil procedure enabling the council to go on to enforcement, explaining what the council's enforcement options were and saying that if possible non-payers should attend their own court hearing.

The majority political view inside the Leeds Federation was that large numbers of non-payers turning up to court willing to argue their cases would make the system unworkable. This view was strongly propounded by both the 'Militant tendency' and the liberal-minded independants. This meant trying to argue cases on legal technicalities one by one. It required a team of volunteers acting as unofficial legal advisers (McKenzies Friends) at every court date. A legal group was set up to coordinate this. This strategy is dull, defensive and creates an unnecessary hierarchy between activists and ordinary people. After all who really cares about the legal niceties of transitional relief! The idea that we could clog up the courts is also naive, because given a mass turn out all the council has to do is either adjourn cases, or keep going till people are forced to go home for reasons such as childcare.

Realism

A second political viewpoint was that of encouraging people to express their anger. This may have led to more noisy mass disruptions of the court. This viewpoint was propounded by the 'Socialist Workers' and the anarchists. One argument against this at the time was that after the court was cleared of protesters, many hundreds of liability orders would go through unopposed. In reality this is what happened every time anyway, because as soon as the cases where people had actually turned up were finished, hundreds more went through on a nod. A second argument was that disruptions would only work once or twice

and could not be repeated every single day. This is true, but there was no reason why the two strategies could not be mixed.

What actually happened was that the council managed to steamroller the cases through court. But only just! On each court date activists turned up to give advice, to take names and addresses in order to put people in touch with their local group, to act as McKenzies Friends, and to provide tea and coffee during the long wait. Often people who arrived at ten in the morning would have to wait till late afternoon before their case was heard. For us the most useful part of this whole process was that the time most non-payers spent outside waiting to go into court was a great opportunity to have direct in-depth conversations with a broad cross-section of non-payers. Almost all were working class.

BEATING THE BAILIFFS

In the new year the focus has changed. The emphasis of local groups is now to defend those threatened by the bailiffs. Firstly this has meant an information campaign on the legal rights of the bailiff. This clearly shows that bailiffs are not allowed to break into your house on their first visit. (Or second visit if they didn't get in first time). So the first and most important line of defence is to keep them out. Don't let them into your house. The next thing to do is call for support.

The main aspect of current organising work is to build a network of street reps. These people have the task of mobilising other people in the area when someone in their street is faced with the bailiffs at the door. At the moment in many local areas telephone trees of activists are being publicised, but as yet there has been very little discussion of what to do in an actual situation where we are face to face with the bailiffs. `Militant Tendency' members seem to almost fetishise long lists of contacts, but to discourage discussion on what we're actually going to do.

Also set up have been four anti-bailiff coordination groups, one for each quarter of the city (N,E,S,W). Their major task at the moment seems to be finding activists who are available during the day and have a car. Finally there is a bailiff monitoring group whose task is to find out who and where the bailiffs are. And to research the legality of their operations and whether we can stop some of the dirty tricks by taking them to court.

So far the response to the bailiffs has been patchy. In the first few cases of them visiting we did not find out till after they had gone. But everyone has refused to let them in and kept them out on the doorstep. Already they have been exceeding their powers. For example, refusing to identify themselves at the door, threatening to come back later and smash the door in and making a list of items by looking through the window or in one case by guesswork and then claiming `walking possession'.

IN THE WORKPLACE

For the workplace anti-poll tax groups now is the time the first wage arrestments are being made and it is important that these are fought collectively and with the full support of local area groups. The second major task will be to counter the coming propaganda offensive by the council. Come March the council will have to set a new rate. Poll tax non-payers will be blamed for any rise. But more importantly the council will probably announce cuts in jobs and services, again blaming the non-payers. We need to win the argument in council workplaces and unions that it is the poll tax to blame for the cuts not those fighting it.

POLITICAL HACKS AND ANARCHIST REVOLUTIONARIES!

While the workplace and local groups spend most of their time and resources on campaigning, the Leeds Federation has often been riven with sectarian political squabbles. By now it tends to be only the most politically motivated activists that turn up to these meetings. The structure though is still fairly open. The Fed. meets twice a month, one meeting is open to anyone and the other is open to one delegate per group.

There are three main political factions at this level. First, the `Militant Tendency', who are very dull serious politicos but they do a lot of the committed local work. The biggest problem with them is their sectarian arrogance. They believe they are the backbone of the anti-poll tax movement. Secondly is the Socialist Workers Party who are more lively but less committed. At the moment they seem to be more active doing anti-Gulf war work. Thirdly there are the independents who are a loose collection of committed activists, not sharing a common political ideology. In Leeds a collective has formed to produce a regional 3D bulletin. The mix of politics inside 3D includes a range from `Trotskyism' (`Socialist Organiser') to anarchist communism.

Grassroots

The small class struggle anarchist scene in Leeds has not really been involved in the bureaucratic wranglings at the Leeds Fed. Rather, many individuals have been involved in their own local groups and just done the active grassroots work. Leeds Class War and Direct Action Movement groups jointly produced a leaflet which was handed out outside the courts. In it,it was stressed that the main struggle for the campaign would be defeating the common fear of the bailiffs. It is this fear that the council rely on to scare people into paying. We criticised the idea that the movement could `win' in court.

The much larger `lifestylist' anarchist scene is not involved in organised activity at all. But large numbers do turn out for demos and it goes without saying that it is these people who tend to cause the most trouble for the council, the police and the bureaucrats running the Leeds Fed.

One specific area of activity is exclusive to the anarchist scene, that is the support of those arrested and imprisoned on the anti-poll tax demos. All of the dozen or so arrested have been from within the scene. The scene

Cont. on page 10

THis March 23rd sees a demonstration to celebrate a year of non-payment and to show solidarity with all those arrested and imprisoned after last March's demo. Make this demonstration even bigger than last year's by turning out on the day,and bring your friends and neighbours.See you in London!

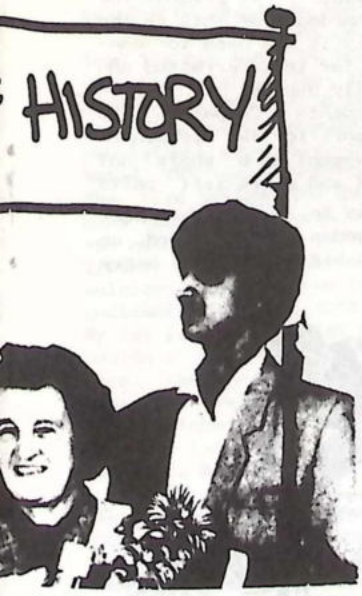
POLL TAX PRISONERS LIST

Show support for all those imprisoned as a result of activity against the PollTax by sending letters to the following:

Wayne Calder-NT0082,HMYOI Huntercombe,Huntercombe Place,Nuffield, Henley-on-Thames Oxon RG9 5SB.Sentenced to 2 years.
Robert Robinson Prison No.RA0741,HMP Camp Hill,Clissold Road,Newport,Isle of Wight,PO30 5PB.Sentenced to 2 years.
Neil Armour-MV3338,HMP Wandworth,Heathfield Rd,Wandsworth,London SW18 3HS>Sentenced to 2 years,one year suspended. Alan Clarke-MV2254,HMP Pentonville,Caledonian Rd, LondonN7 8TT. Sentenced to 2 years (He can`t read so send cards rather than letters)

The following are on remand:

Marcus B. Roskilly-KT1294,HMP Brixton,Jebb Avenue,London SW2 5XF.
Daniel Atwood-KT1303,HMP Brixton.
Paul Jacob,RA0711,HMP Brixton.(Paul is a traveller. His home and 2 vans have since been destroyed. A Support Fund has been set up to raise money for a new van for him when he gets out.Cheques payable to D.Spencer,to Box S,34 Cowley Rd,Oxford.



COMMUNE Continued

The Kronstadters also wanted to see a restitution of proletarian freedom which had been systematically eliminated by the Bolsheviks since 1918. The communards had absolutely no desire for any restoration of power to the exploiters, but freedom of speech and assembly for the peasants, workers and their political allies was an important demand. This attempt to restore the freedom of the pre-October days was of some urgency since it was not only the bourgeoisie who were to be found in the prisons; virtually the whole of the non-Bolshevik left had been incarcerated.

In reality, a whole dictatorial, oppressive state system had been brought into being by Lenin and his party. Their knee-jerk response to any difficulty which arose after their seizure of power was to tighten the screw further; repression, bureaucracy and control were the methods used. A pleasant irony in all of this is that Lenin died a deeply unhappy man once he very belatedly realised the nature of his Frankenstein society. Not only was Lenin's Russia a dictatorship but it also was an extremely hierarchical one. Bourgeois privilege had given way to the privileges of the "commisarocracy". Not surprisingly, the sailors of Kronstadt demanded the "equalisation of rations" for all workers except those engaged in dangerous or unhealthy jobs.

There is no doubt that the insurrectionaries had had a gutful of the Bolsheviks and their methods. Only the overthrow of the Bolsheviks and their replacement by organs of self-organised production together with the granting of freedom to artisans and peasants (as long as they didn't hire labour) could retrieve the situation, argued the Kronstadters. But the Kronstadt demands, even though they had once been mouthed by the Bolsheviks themselves, were met unsurprisingly with repression and slander. Like the communards of Paris, those of Kronstadt put up bitter resistance to the state's bullying and military assault. With the destruction of this last breath of 1917 died the last hope of Russia's oppressed. Only now is there any sign of a rebirth of libertarian ideals.

Louise Michel - anarchist Communard

Self-Organisation

The Paris and Kronstadt Communes were expressions of working class self-activity which continue to provide inspiration. Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyist groups will cynically invoke the former when it suits them whilst, inconsistently, condemning Kronstadt as counterrevolutionary. If they are particularily hypocritical they will cry crocodile tears over the destruction of Kronstadt, pointing to the "tragic necessity" of it all.

But we anarchist communists see in the commune a sketch of how society could be organised. The commune model provides an organisational basis for creating self-directing, integrated units which when federated with similar bodies could have a national and even international character. The Paris and Kronstadt Communes were both brought about under extremely difficult circumstances and lasted only for a matter of weeks. Despite their preoccupation with survival, they demonstrated the practicability of the commune as an organisational form which generated the maximum level of freedom, solidarity and equality. The commune as a geographical entity can accommodate both community and workplace anarchy. It is a model for the future.

POLL TAX Continued

has thus tended to support its own and hence has not fought for support in the wider anti-poll tax movement. Similarly, support for the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign has tended to be limited to the scene. The only time a prisoner has gained wider support was for Bryan Wright, the first person to be jailed for not paying.

IS THE POLL TAX BEATEN?

After the Tory debacle at the end of last year it seemed that the poll tax was in tatters. Thatcher was gone. It seemed the tax had to go as well. Heseltine, chosen by Major as the minister now in charge of the Department of Environment, had stated his `opposition` to it. Millions more people joined the ten million or so non-payers in December and kept some extra spending money for Christmas.

Even if the poll tax is reformed or abolished (as appears likely), the government, or a possible Labour successor, will do their utmost to reclaim poll tax debts. With the deepening recession and the enormous cost of the Gulf War the government cannot afford to buy off protest. Without the option of the carrot the government will use the big stick.

We are seeing this already. The use of McKenzies Friends in court has been taken away as a right. It is now at the magistrates' discretion. The first person to be imprisoned for non-payment was Bryan Wright from Grantham. He spent two weeks in Lincoln prison. Central government has threatened to cap any local authority that does not fall into line by setting a low budget and chasing up the non-payers. The first seizures of property in Scotland by the sherriffs after 21 months. The present media silence on the poll tax as an issue. We can be sure that come March the media will be on the offensive against us. The poll tax non-payers will be blamed for the rise in bills. The campaign in Scotland still has a lot to teach us.

Solidarity

The repression can also be clearly seen in the determination of the courts to follow through with the poll tax riot trials. They are already handing out severe sentences with most of the heaviest cases still to come. Examples are two years for `kicking a police van`, four months in remand for obstruction and one month for custard pieing a councillor. Another facet of this repression is the desire of the police to ban future marches.

Clearly then there is an even stronger need to continue and build further an organised mass campaign of defiance. The strength of this campaign is at present at the grassroots community-based level. We need to go further. Firstly, the campaign needs to be taken much more aggressively into the workplace. The two facets of the campaign should be seen as equally important and mutually supportive. Secondly, is the need for national communication and coordination outside the stranglehold of the `Militant Tendency`. At present the grouping pushing hardest for this is the 3D network. Thirdly is the need to continue the support for those arrested and imprisoned currently done by the Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign. We need to build support for the prisoners in the wider movement as a whole not just the anarchist and ultra-left parts of it. Fourth is to build the next massive demo in London on March 23rd, so that it is just as big and just as angry as the last.

VIETNAM

tion would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh."

The American military build-up

Once established in South Vietnam, the Americans immediately began to destabilize North Vietnam. Eisenhower despatched 300 CIA agents to Hanoi in 1954, gradually increasing their number and scale of operation. In 1961 President Kennedy sent 500 more men to the Saigon military mission and financed secret raids into North Vietnam. The nature of the Diem government in South Vietnam came to the attention of the world in 1963 when a picture of a burning Buddhist monk hit the front pages. He was protesting at the vicious attacks that Diem had launched on Buddhists. Despite the obvious dictatorship that they were supporting, the Johnson administration stepped up operations in 1964 with Operation Plan 34A, `an elaborate programme of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam`.

Up until now, the war had been conducted without the general public really knowing what was going on. It was just another of the many CIA-organised operations that were going on around the world. But all this changed with the Gulf of Tonkin incident.

As part of Operation Plan 34A, raids were being launched into North Vietnam by American naval forces. When Vietnamese torpedo boats chased the raiders they came across two American destroyers which had been covering the raid. Shots were exchanged. Johnson claimed to Congress and the American public that American ships had been the object of "an unprovoked attack". No mention was made of the 34A raids. In less than 12 hours bombers were on their way to Hanoi. The war had began in earnest.

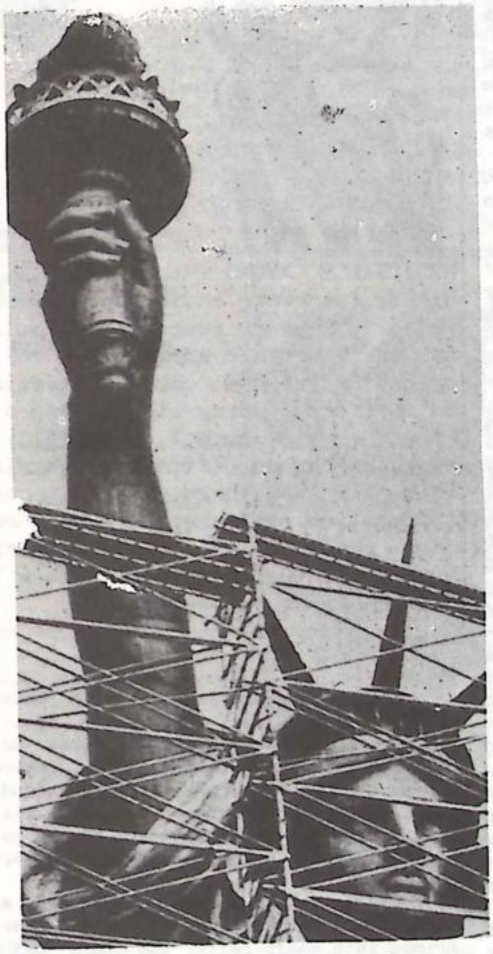
In February 1965, Johnson launched Operation Rolling Thunder: a massive bombing campaign. He did this despite having promised during the election campaign the previous November not to escalate the war. Although many tons of bombs were dropped, the bombing campaign proved to be a total failure. Therefore, troops were sent to start the ground war in April 1965. By 1967 there were 525,000 US troops in Vietnam.

The land war was no more successful than the air war. The Southern Vietnamese Communists (the Viet Cong) were undistinquishable from ordinary villagers. They had the support of much of the population, especially the peasants who hated the large landowners that backed the Diem regime. The Americans did not know how to deal with such a guerilla war and became more and more desperate. Typical of the actions that American soldiers were involved in was the My Lai incident. They went into the village of My lai looking for Viet Cong. When they couldn't figure out who the Viet Cong were, they proceeded to systematically massacre the whole village. When they had finished 504 villagers had been killed, including 173 children, 56 of whom were babies.

Back in American, with incidents like My Lai making headlines and the number of American casualties growing, the public became increasingly disillusioned with the war. When the Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive in January 1968, simultaneously attacking 80 stategic centres, disillusionment became rampant with protests escalating by the day.

Richard Nixon campaigned for President in November 1968 on a `peace` platform. He promised to withdraw American land troops and `Vietnamise` the war. He planned to rely primarily on air and naval attacks which would hide the effects of the war and reduce American casualities. His `peace plan~ was no more effective than
previous plans. Bombing hadn't produced the results before and it didn't succeed this time. Noam Chomsky writes,

"While travelling in North Vietnam I was shown a bridge, still standing uneasily, that was attacked daily from 1965 until the termination og regular bombing, with 99 American jet planes



lost- the cost in planes alone must be $500 million, to destroy one bridge."

Protests continued and the war continued with the bombing of Cambodia. In 1972 Americans sent B-52s to drop 40,000 tons of bombs on heavily populated Hanoi. The bombing lasted 12 days and led to even other western governments voicing their protests. By the time the Americans finally accepted defeat and went to the negotiating table at the end of 1972, 56,000 American soldiers had been killed, 303,000 had been wounded and countless numbers of Vietnamese had lost their lives. Between 1964 and 1972 $108 billion dollars had been spent. Every enemy soldier had cost $500,000 to kill.

The US and its allies hoped that the Gulf War would develop in a totally different direction from that of the Vietnam war. The latest hi-tech weapons were supposed to be more effective than the B-52s of the Vietnam era. The blatant anti-people nature of the bombing in Vietnam where success was measured in terms of people killed or maimed was replaced by sanitised precision bombing of military targets. The land war was delayed again and again in order to avoid casualties of Americans and their allies. The media was more controlled and was fed endless rubbish in hopes of distracting the public from the realities of war. The emphasis has been on a quick victory, never admitting that the Vietnam War was supposed to have ended after a few months. Saddam Hussein is an obvious tyrant whereas Ho Chi Minh appeared to have more support amongst the people so that the US could be more credible in its claim to be opposing tyranny. The Iraqis invaded Kuwait and in Vietnam it was the US who was the invader.

Precision bombing of military targets has turned out to mean many civilian casualties. The war protests were there from day one, deliberately played down by the media, but there nevertheless. Many Arab governments were very worried about a prolonged war as their people cried out against their support of the western imperialists and infidels.

The Vietnam War came to an end for a variety of reasons. The US was defeated militarily, the cost of the war both politically and economically was becoming too much for the ruling class itself and the anti-war movement put pressure on the US government. It's difficult to say which factor was decisive in bringing about the end of the war. This time the US and its allies won the war.It's important to look at the lessons from both the Vietnam and the Gulf War and apply them in any future wars that will take place. The New World Order has been established, and the US and European blocs, in collaboration with the Soviet bloc, will continue to act as the world's police. As revolutionary anarchist communists we see that the only long term solution to war is the overthrow of the system that produces it. We have to build an international revolutionary movement, a movement that rejects all the power blocs, and does not fall into the trap of supporting one set of rulers because they are perceived as being one's enemy's enemy, are " unwittingly anti-imperialist" and are leading the fight against the great imperialist powers. For us the ruling class is international, and everywhere it is our oppressor. The building of this revolutionary movement will be a difficult task, but it is the only real answer to the wars and famines that will prevail until this evil set-up has its foundations demolished.

THE AMERICAN ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

For the first part of the war, up until 1964, Americans had little idea of what was going on in Vietnam. It was only another American covert operation. The Gulf of Tonkin incident brought the war to the forefront, but it wasn't until the numbers drafted increased along with the casualties that the media took an interest in what was going on.

As the casualties mounted and when

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it became obvious that the US wasn't winning, the anti-war movement began to grow. In addition, incidents like My Lai brought home to people what the soldiers were actually doing to people in Vietnam. The massive bombing campaign had only been an abstraction; the objects of the B-52s and the napalm bombs were not real to most Americans. But the dead soldiers and the pictures of My Lai could not be ignored and led to a massive anti-war movement.

The movement was dominated by student groups. This did not mean that the movement was only a middle class movement. A much larger section of the population stay on in further education in America. But the organised working class were not only not involved in the movement, but were often openly hostile. This was not the case for the black working class who saw the anti-war movement as having similar objectives and enemies. It was often black people who couldn't avoid the draft as they were not rich or well-connected like current Vice-President Dan Quail.

The anti-war movement was divided into primarily two tendencies. There were those that were against the war because the US was not winning and it wasn't worth it in terms of loss of American lives or the cost of military spending. Many of these still saw the Vietnamese as the aggressor and the US as defenders of freedom; it just didn't seem worth the effort. The second tendency,with wide variations within it, were aware of the true nature of US involvement:imperialist,self-interested aggression. For a whole generation of young people, the growing awareness that the rubbish they had been fed at school about America being the champion of freedom and democracy was a pack of lies, gave way to anger and rage at the entire system. As many looked deeper into the reasons why the US was in Vietnam, they began to see what the real problem was: an economic and political system that adopted policies that were wanted by a few while the ordinary people, the working class suffered both on the battlefield and in the lack of facilities at home due to the money spent on war. In other words, the real enemy was capitalism. This awareness led people to look for alternatives. Unfortunately, the alternatives were very limited and took on strange directions.

Some advocated `turning on, tuning in and dropping out`. People experimented with drugs and alternative lifestyles, setting up communes or living rough on the streets of the city. Others, in their rejection of American capitalism, supported unquestioningly the countries that claimed to be socialist. Ho Chi Minh was idolised and activity against the war became activity in support of the Vietnamese ~communist~ regime. People chanted pro-Vietnamese slogans and did the `Ho Chi Minh hop` on demos. Various factions emerged based primarily on the support of a particular regime or ideologue. Pro-Albanians debated with pro-Soviets as Trotskyists clashed with Maoists. They also romanticised all Third World national liberation struggles, putting them forward as the vanguard in the fight against world capitalism. These attitudes both reinforced and were reinforced by the organised white working class's support for the war.

RESISTANCE AMONG THE AMERICAN military was a major but little publicised factor in ending the war. In June 1971 Colonel Robert D. Heinl wrote, "By every conceivable factor our army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited when not near mutinous". (Armed Forces Journal, June 1971)

Attacks on officers ("fraggings") rose from 126 in 1969 to 271 in 1970. In 1968 there were 68 recorded incidents of combat refusal. By 1969 entire units were refusing orders and by 1970 there were 35 seperate refusals in the Air Cavalry alone. Desertion and AWOL (Absent Without Leave) became epidemic with one GI leaving every three minutes at the height og the war.

Though we would disagree with many of the ideas of the anti-system activists, they were some of the first in our recent history to argue that capitalism could not be reformed and needed to be overthrown. Whatever their faults they left a legacy of ideas that are still influencing us today, for better or worse.

As anarchist-communists we have a particular perspective on wars. War brings into sharp relief the class nature of society, the oppressive nature of all states and the need for working class internationalism. We have no illusions that any of the warring sides are any better even if the country is fighting US imperialism. Ho Chi Minh used an authoritarian army and bureaucracy to control and dominate the workers and peasants. The war was not waged to deter aggression or defend freedom but to preserve the economic and political interests of the ruling class. In addition, we are not against a war because 'our boys' are getting killed or because 'we' are not winning. We are against war because of what is doing to working class people on both sides. Thousands of Vietnamese had been killed but the shooting of 4 students by the National Guard at Kent State University in 1970 sparked off a disproportionate amount of activity. This is not the basis on which to build an anti-war movement.

THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE GULF WAR

Having looked at what happened in the Vietnam War we can now see many similarities with the Gulf War. Freedom was not an objective of the Gulf War any more than it was in the Vietnam War. Bombing was seen at a distance, the media uninterested in the real effects of that bombing. There was tacit or even enthusiastic support for war as long as it was not "our boys" that were getting killed.

Within the anti-war movement there are also comparisons to be made. Some argue that the war was justified but not worth it and others have made a hero out of Saddam Hussein, an even more brutal dictator than Ho Chi Minh. Anarchist-communists will continue to oppose all wars between states, not because killing is wrong in itself, because one side is better than the other or because the British working class is suffering. We oppose wars because they have horrific consequences for ordinary people and go against the interests of all working class people regardless of nationality. Our opposition to the war comes from our opposition to capitalism. It is vital that we build any future anti-war movement on this basis.

The imperialist mentality

Imperialism thrives on fear. It is relatively easy to convince people that there is a threat from a different nation, class, tribe, or racial group and that everything must be done to combat this. Today as we see in the Gulf, this includes the possible use of atomic, biological and chemical weapons. Eliminate, suppress, enslave are the mottoes of imperialism from Ghengis Khan to Adolf Hitler. Force is the way to ensure the domination of one side or the other. In the attempt to create socialism similar results have arisen because power has been seized and wielded by the party apparatus involving corruption, militarism and new class models, ie. industrial management and its abuses typically revealed in Russia.

The anarchist alternative has rarely been applied on a large scale and is axiomatically abhorrent to international and social imperialism. It also contradicts the competitive element fostered by capitalism. Our main appeal is therefore to the oppressed working class and rootless and alienated youth, for the simple reason that they have nothing to lose and much to gain from collective labour, distribution of produce and democratic decision making where even the ideas of the minority can theoretically be applied, for example in agricultural and industrial experiments. Our main task is therefore to convince those who believe they benefit from the fruits of power, that those fruits are rotten to the core. Capitalism corrupts, pollutes, and enslaves. It can not even distribute its surplus food to famine regions, famines partly created by its own imbalanced methods.

AMA
Edinburgh

War in the Gulf

RECENTLY I've been ploughing through the INDEPENDENT in order to keep up with developments in the Gulf and I came across a paragraph which caught my attention. It was printed on 15 Jan 1991, the date on which the United Nations instructed Iraq to leave Kuwait before military force was to be used: "In a ground war the most difficult objective will be Kuwait City itself. Fighting in a built up

area is a dirty, dangerous and tricky business....the cost of taking Kuwait City, held by a division of at least 12,000 men, will be horrific. The city includes many blocks of flats which are very difficult to clear. The,standard way is to go in from the top by helicopter. Having worked your way down to the bottom,enemy engineers can set off prepared demolition charges, destroying the building and wiping out a full company sent to clear it. This has an adverse effect on the company sent to clear the next block."

The last line, especially, of the above quote will be ringing in the ears of the ruling class. It would not be a far step from mutiny, one of the most feared words in the vocabulary of the military establishment. It underlines the futility of predatory wars. The nightmare scenario of chemical and biological warfare is an untested factor in this particular equation. In March 1988 5,000 Kurds in the town of Halabja were killed in a matter of minutes by chemical weapons unleashed by the Iraqis. This kind of atrocity could well be repeated on a much larger scale. Revolutionary movements are often born of the death and destruction brought about by the greed and avarice of capitalism, when even its most loyal servants turn against it, when society is paralysed by dissension and opposition.

A heavy military defeat for Iraq could provoke unprecedented hostility towards the USA and sharpen the conflict with the Israeli state. However this would no longer take the form of acts of terrorism but resolute mass action on the part of Arab workers throughout the Middle East. They would throw off the shackles of nationalism and fundamentalism and topple the motley collection of dictatorial regimes which have prevented the entry of workers into the 20th century.

We have to be clear in our minds that conflagrations of this kind are a natural by-product of the periodic crises of capitalism.No matter how tenaciously their apologists defend this small-minded parochialism we anarchists will continue to propagate the ideals of proletarian internationalism as a superior system to theirs. The Praetorian Guard will become the revolutionary guard and they will steadfastly refuse to go back to the Stone Age. In the distant future people will visit their local museum and marvel at the curious relics on display: a police truncheon,a UB40 card and a photograph of carpet bombing raids on Iraq.

G (*)
Gillingham.

WE WELCOME LETTERS on all subjects covered by Organise!.

Please keep letters to around 250 words - otherwise we may need to edit them.

We endeavour not to alter the meaning of a letter if we have to cut it and apologise if this occurs. Edited letters are marked at the end with a (*).

Eastern Europe

On the whole I think the paper is very good. If I have a criticism it is that, in the issues I have seen so far (16-20), you are not critical enough of some of the anarchist groups in other countries, particularly the ones emerging in Eastern Europe. Just because these groups call themselves anarchists doesn't mean that they are sound revolutionaries - in many cases the ideas which they are putting forward appear to be a jumble of liberalism/leftism. If these ideas were being put forward by anarchist groups in this country I think you would be far more severe in your assessment. In your article on the Trieste conference in issue 20 you tend to be more critical and I hope you keep this up, otherwise you are doing a grave disservice to the growing struggles of the East European working class.

MS
Leeds.

YOU ARE RIGHT in saying that in many cases the ideas which the anarchist groups in Eastern Europe are putting forward are confused, and contain large elements of liberalism and leftism. However, there is a big difference between the situation in Eastern Europe and the West. There has been a complete break with the past due to the Stalinist ice age and many fruitful experiences have been forgotten. Anarchists in Eastern Europe are faced with little practical and theoretical experience, and little anarchist literature. The movement emerged, in most cases, from a counter-culture-the only place it could emerge from, given the conditions in Eastern Europe. Obviously it is still influenced by that counter-culture, with the preoccupations with punk and alternative communities. Illusions in the market will, we hope, disappear as the effects of the market are felt. We feel that this is already the case in Poland, where the movement does seem to be making theoretical advances. We do refuse to make apologies for these groups,but at the same time we feel that a constructive dialogue needs to be opened up, so that they can advance. One recent example of developments is that of the Hungarian group AUTONOMIA which realised the differences within its own ranks and split into 4 groups- one involved with the setting up of an alternative community, one trying to link theoretical development with action, anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-punks.

Direct democracy

DIRECT DEMOCRACY NETWORK: This will be an international project which aims to produce some practical analysis of direct democracy(its strengths and weaknesses)with a special interest in mass organisations which use rotation of delegates(e.g.the Spanish dockers Coordinadora or the CGT-CNT branch at Michelin in the Basque country).

We would like to hear from anyone with practical experience, or who is interested in giving their criticisms of draft texts,doing translations(where possible we will work in Spanish as well as English),or in any way getting involved.

Various already existing texts on this subject will be sent to anyone interested.

Contact:Mick Parkin,39 Vesta Road,Brockley,London SE4 2NJ

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide, and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives wil always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchist we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called 'socialists' or 'communists' we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement. •

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Racism in football

WITH ENGLISH FOOTBALL teams now being accepted back into Europe, and League football as popular as ever, the United European Football Association and the Football Association are supposedly trying to stamp out hooliganism. But one thing they conveniently ignore is racism. One popular myth about racism is that it is confined to the terraces - this is rubbish, racism is everywhere. It runs through the changing rooms, boardrooms and the sports administrations at the highest levels. It's not confined to the big clubs either- it can be seen on a smaller scale at non-League clubs too.

One of the most disturbing aspects is the two-faced attitude of some of the so-called fans- one minute they are racially abusing a black player from the other team, the next they're singing the praises of a black player from their own side.

Causes

Even though racism effects the national and international game, not much thought has been given as to its causes. Banks of England fans giving Nazi salutes and screaming abuse at John Barnes at the 1990 World Cup game in Sweden give a clear picture of what goes on. International games often promote and reinforce nationalism-always racist and putting the "Nation" above the classes. The State, politicians and the media, and racist-fascist groups promote this.

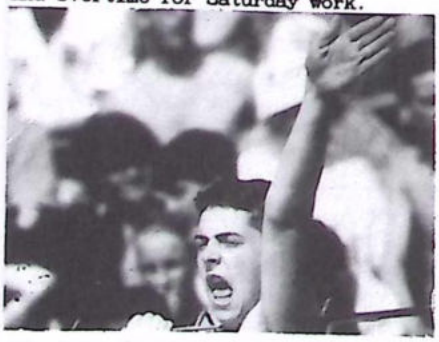
It is important to draw a distinction between hardcore racists and fascists and those who allow themselves to be drawn so easily into blind, ignorant prejudice by racist groups such as the British National Party. who are looking to spread their foul ideas and recruit new members.

It's up to football fans to do something about racism - we are the ones who have to stand in an unpleasant, hostile environment. Racism divides and weakens us, the working class.

Liberal

It's no use lobbying or pressurising directors, the League or the F.A. to start a preachy white liberal anti-racist campaign. It's a waste of our energy because these people and bodies are racist themselves, and because racism in the working class can only be tackled by the working class itself.

The police, apart from being racist themselves, frequently help and defend fascist and racist activists, when they're not thinking about their bonuses and overtime for Saturday work.



Hardcore

Hardcore racists and fascists need to be physically confronted in and outside grounds and their paper sales, leafletting, abuse and intimidation stopped. This type of work has been effectively done by groups such as Anti-Fascist Action.Fanzines produced by football supporters such as Fortune's Always Hiding(West Ham)Marching Together(Leeds United)Our Day Will Come(Manchester United and Celtic) have a role to play. Many already carry a clear, working class anti-racist message. Club rivalry between fans should be friendly and generous. All too often it's nearer war and rival fans are abused and beaten up. The magnanimous cheering of the Woking side by West Bromwich fans when their side had just lost 4-2 to the non-League club shows how things could be, though there is the wider question of whether competition naturally leads to aggression and violence. The " easily swayed " racially prejudiced fans need to be talked to, argued with and confronted in a clear class-conscious manner which demolishes racist myths(they're taking our housing and jobs, Africa as the source of AIDS,etc) and shown that racism must be tackled both because it is oppressive and because it divides and weakens the working class. This should all be done in a direct, honest way which acknowledges that all white people have some racism in themselves to tackle and that much can be learnt from the struggles of black working class people. It should not be done in a preaching "I'm right-on, you're a racist" way which is dishonest, counterproductive and reformist.

Anti-Fascist Action can be contacted at:

B.M. BOX 1734 LONDON WC1 N3XX

Housing in the nineties

AMIDST ALL THE bluster and rhetoric about a `just' war to defend democracy, freedom and human dignity, the Arctic snows of February managed to draw some media attention to the plight of people sleeping rough. Indeed, one M.P. was apparently `shocked' at the sight of homeless people `caked in snow'.

It has been estimated that there are about 3,000 people in London alone who sleep in the streets. Yet homelessness goes much further than the visible signs of people in shop doorways or `cardboard city'. When you start to include those in bed and breakfasts, hostels, squats and other temporary accommodation, homeless figures in Britain reach about one million.

Deliberate

Homelessness in this country has been steadily worsening over the last twenty-odd years. Admittedly, it is a permanent feature of capitalist society but the current state of housing has more or less been deliberately created by the Government.

Since 1979, government spending on council homes has fallen by 75%. Coupled with this, over a million council homes have been sold since 1981. It`s safe to say that today, the building of council accommodation is at a virtual standstill.

Having said this, plenty of housing is still being built. Yet the millions spent and invested has been on homes for the rich. Working class people don`t even get a look in.

Interest

With the complete lack of affordable and decent rented accommodation alongside constant plugging of `right to buy' and `everyone an owner occupier' propaganda, many from the better off end of the working class saw home ownership as an option. But with high interest rates, 1989 saw over 40,000 families lose their homes because they were unable to keep up with mortgage repayments. This has more than doubled over the last year.

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ORGANISE!

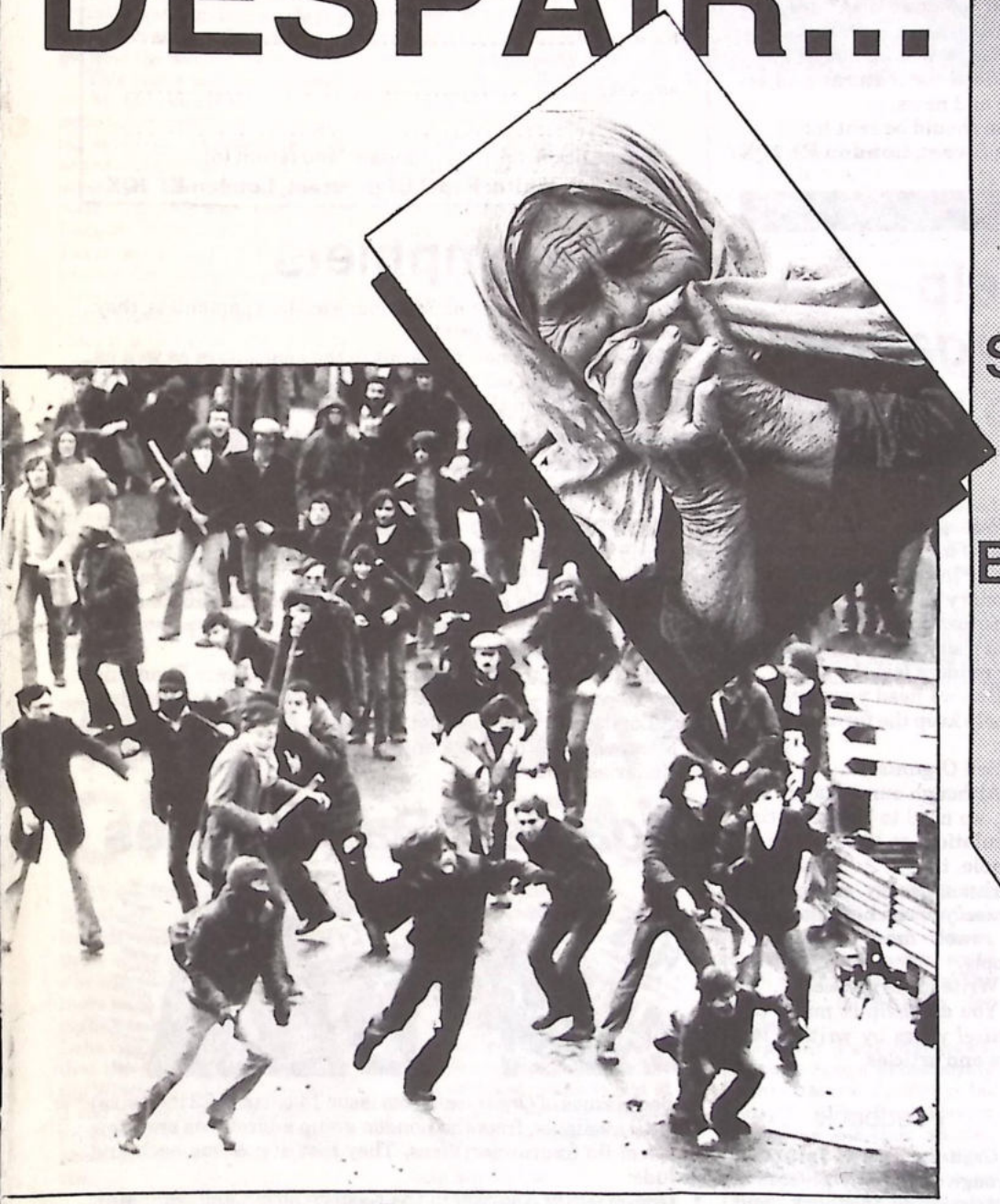
for class struggle anarchism

40p

June-August
1991

Issue 23

DESPAIR...



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INTERVIEW

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Magazine of the
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ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* – as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Due to summer break, the next issue will be out in early October. The deadlines are August 13th for features and reviews, and September 4th for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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Who We Are...

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:-

Aylesbury
Chesterfield
Coventry
Derry
Essex
Gillingham
Glasgow
Leamington Spa
Leeds
London
Manchester
Newcastle
Northumberland
Nottingham
Oxford
Rugby
Sheffield
Staffordshire

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally and has contact with like-minded anarchists overseas.

For all contact write to:
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Help *Organise!* to grow

WE FEEL THAT *Organise!* has an important role to play in the growth of revolutionary activity and ideas in these exciting times. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

But we need your support to help keep the furnace burning.

Sell *Organise!*

Although our sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!*

You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Feedback

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

ACE pamphlets

Due to the massive demand for our excellent pamphlets, they are currently all out of print.

We hope to bring new titles out in the near future as well as re-prints of some of our out of print titles.

Details will be in the October issue of *Organise!*

PRESS FUND

THE PRESS FUND exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of *Organise!* Money is always needed for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. We also want to see *Organise!* produced more frequently, with more pages and with a greater print run. Money is also needed to finance more pamphlets.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue: 70 pounds – Gillingham; 50 pence – Cardiff; 50 pounds – East London; 10 pounds – Nottingham.

Meanwhile, if there are any socially aware millionaire revolutionaries about ...

Organise! Back Issues

Back issues of *Organise!* (from issue 14 to issue 22 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 40p & sae each and include:

- *Organise!* 17: Anarchy in the Eastern bloc; Cambodia; Militant and the poll tax.
- *Organise!* 18: Eastern Europe; ambulance crews; Gerry Healy's death.
- *Organise!* 19: Poll tax and prison riots; Mandela myth; ecology and class.
- *Organise!* 20: Class struggle in Ireland; Romania; poll tax update.
- *Organise!* 21: Gulf war; Russia in crisis; Brixton.
- *Organise!* 22: Recession; poll tax; warfare state; Commune; Asia.

A Fairer Tax?

The defeat of the poll tax was quite rightly seen as a victory for the anti-poll tax movement and for the working class. However, the victory will be short-lived. We may have got rid of the poll tax but we haven't got rid of taxes in general, or the system that makes ordinary working class people pay for whatever "benefits" they may get from the welfare state.

This year's poll tax has been cut by 140 pounds to defuse the issue before getting rid of the poll tax altogether. However, the 140 pounds had to be made up from somewhere else and it certainly wasn't the rich who would pay. Instead, VAT was put up by 2.5%. Taxes on spending are well-known for being "regressive" meaning that they hit the people on the lowest incomes the hardest since it is this group that spends a greater proportion of its income. The rich put more of their money into investments or can go abroad to shop if it suits them. So, although we are supposedly 140 pounds better off, the increase in prices resulting from VAT increases and the increase on cigarettes, alcohol and petrol will soon do away with any gains. In addition, many didn't actually pay the poll tax, but it's difficult to create a mass movement that would stop paying VAT.

The proposals for changes in local taxation are in the planning stages but it's not obvious that ordinary working class people will be much better off. The tax will combine the previous rates system with the idea that everyone should pay something. People with higher valued property will pay more than those in low valued property or council property. The poll tax element has been maintained in that the tax will also be based on the number of adults living in the property so that people living alone will pay less.

On the surface this seems "fairer" but then as with the reduction in the poll tax this year, the money has to be got from somewhere.

RICH

Since it won't come from the rich, it's more of a battle between who in the working class and the lower middle class will bear the burden of taxation. As anarchist-communists we must therefore be very wary about getting involved in debates about which tax is "fairer". Anything that puts more money in the hands of working class people at the expense of the rich is to be welcomed, but this is rarely the case. The anti-poll tax movement may have put a stop to a direct assault on the working class but it has not led to any redistribution of income from rich to poor.

If income tax is raised on the rich, they have their tax havens and creative accountants. If companies are taxed, they just raise the prices we have to pay. If landlords are taxed, they raise rents. And if taxes aren't increased they cut services that working class people rely on.

SOCIETY

As long as society is controlled by a ruling class which has power to twist anything to their advantage, we will be paying taxes to support their system. If the State does provide anything remotely useful like the health service,they make sure we pay out a large part of our miserable wages for it.

Taxes have been around as long as class society. Their main purpose has always been to extract the fruits of labour from working people. for the benefit of the privileged. In Egypt, it was the common people that were forced to build the pyramids,. In the Middle Ages it was the peasants who had to give some of their labour and produce to the lord in return for "protection".

Today we pay a whole range of taxes that supports the royal family, war and the military, the police and courts and a lot of bureaucrats who sit around thinking of new ways to get money out of us.

Yes, we have got rid of the poll tax, but we are still being ripped off. There is no such thing as a fair tax.

THE LONG ARM OF THE STATE

The Guildford 4 and the Birmingham 6 have been released. The police involved in these cases are being disciplined – or not, as the case maybe – and there have been calls for the disciplining of the Chief justice, Lane. We all know, or should do, that the 4, the 6, the Maguires, the Winchester 3, the Tottenham 3 and a host of others were imprisoned to satisfy the vampirish needs of the governmental system.

It needs external and internal threats to keep themselves in power. The carefully sustained and continually updated threat of the Criminal, the Terrorist, the Red, the Anarchist achieves a specific set of aims:

- 'National Unity' can be achieved against the uncivilised barbarians, the Argy, the Muslim, the Irish
- new repressive laws and codes of practice can be brought in and continually justified as with the Prevention of Terrorism Act
- the forces of law and order can be justified
- people are force fed reasons to feel attacked, crime is laid at the door of "outsiders" people "higher in the social hierarchy have those "lower" down to take any blame.

Our beloved boys and girls in blue can run around shooting young children, shooting women in their own home, literally frightening others to death, drowning people in Huddersfield, strangling them in Wolverhampton, shooting them in Hackney police station, framing them left right and cente.

The West Midlands Police Serious Crimes Squad has been under investigation – what shock, what horror that people could think ill of our lovely coppers! The allegations have been for example:

- Inspector Paul Matthews. Forced to resign for disobeying orders (there's an oddity) Involved in framing Martin Foran, an anarchist activist, on robbery charges in 1985. The person robbed has always stated that it could not have been him.
- Detective Superintendent John Brown. Negligent. He loses notes, tortures defendants to extract confessions – by holding plastic bags over their heads – fabricates evidence, we are informed.
- Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby. Subject of complaints. We are told he planted a shotgun on one defendant. Three trials collapsed in which he was involved.
- Detective Superintendent James Kelly. Reprimanded on 4 counts of discreditable conduct. Involved in the Birmingham 6 case, where he used assault to gain a confession.

Shaky evidence

We have witnessed so many of these cases for years. Hundreds of cases during the Miners Strike, like the Orgreave rioters were

Cont. Over Page

LESSONS OF POLL TAX VICTORY

Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan in their working clothes, review the latest edition of *Militant*.

The poll tax has been beaten but limps along for the time being certain of its expiry. Now seems a reasonable time to analyse the impact of the poll tax and evaluate the lessons which flow from it.

First of all, whatever the alternatives that will come into operation, it must be accepted that the defeat of the tax marks a major victory for the working class. It was introduced as yet one more attack on the working class of Britain, shifting, as it did, the main burden of locally raised taxation from the rich and the middle class to the less well off. Some sections within the working class were particularly badly hit, low paid workers, housewives, and many black people.

It was these people who most solidly resisted payment. They did so partly from an understanding of the nature of the poll tax, but mainly on the principle of "Can't Pay, Won't Pay". They simply refused to be impoverished further. What is more, by non-payment of *any* local tax, millions of working class people were actually better off in terms of their disposable income. With the exception of committed leftists most of those in the professional strata, despite any professed radical

CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE

The poll tax has been beaten. Thatcher has gone down with the sinking ship. This is a victory for the millions of working class people who stood up and defied the tax. The first major victory after a decade of defeats. This is an excellent morale boost and a confidence builder for us all – a small taste of the changes we can achieve through mass political action. However we have only won a battle – not the war. We still have two more years of poll tax bills landing on our doormats, we will still be summonsed to court, still have to battle with bailiffs.

The ruling class strategy to split the movement was simple. Attack it. Political witch-hunting and criminalisation of those who fought back against the police at Trafalgar Square was to be used. Raids and jail sentences to intimidate and isolate the activists. The wedge of "law and order" to split the movement: ordinary citizens against violent extremists. Despite disgusting statements from Steve Nally and Tommy Sheridan, the anti-poll tax movement did not split. Millions of people in England and Wales followed the example of one million non-payers in Scotland and refused to pay.

With the tax beaten the mass involvement in the campaign has reduced. What is left is a small organised core of activists and millions of people who have lost all interest in the poll tax altogether.

They won't pay, return forms or even turn up to court but neither will they return to the streets and fight on this issue as they did a year ago. What we need now is an honest political debate within the shrinking number of committed activists, otherwise we'll just become an unpaid, overworked, overstretched welfare service for the thousands facing bailiffs and ultimately jail. That we need to continue the fight until there is a complete amnesty for all non-payers and amnesty and release for those criminalised and imprisoned on anti-poll tax demonstrations is obvious. But we must see this as part of a much wider class struggle. What the anti-poll tax struggle has taught us is the power of autonomous grass roots organisation in the community and the workplace. It's 1:0 to us with the poll tax but we have to go much, much further yet.

LONG ARM OF THE STATE

Contd.

thrown out of court because of shaky evidence. The government response was to bring in the Public Order Act to make it easier to convict.

The Hillsborough disaster was a huge own goal. The attempt to blame drunken hooligans by the police and the Sun for deaths caused by police incompetence was typical. The verdicts of accidental death were a further cover-up.

With monotonous and nauseating regularity police and courts conspire to punish victims of racist violence. To defend yourself against attack successfully it seems you have to be white, male and middle class – or a copper. The shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland is still shrouded in mystery. The fiasco of the Wapping cops, with their union bleating about the time taken to prosecute them, the now permanent Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Criminal Justice Bill are all further attempts by the rulers to permanently criminalise anyone it wishes.

Why do we let this go on? we suffer under harsher and harsher laws. We are fed a continuous stream of hysterical fairy stories by the media. We allow the police to kick us, shoot us, drown us, maim us, strangle us, frame us. We allow the courts to apply any prejudice they feel, the reactionary, racist, public school judge is all there is. Governments sit happily talking of rotten apples and find more justifications for harsher policing.

Enough!

views, overwhelmingly paid up.

Another important feature of the movement was its mass and generalised character. As the huge demonstrations showed, virtually every town and village in Britain had its anti-poll tax group. People who had never been to a political meeting in their lives turned up at hastily organised public meetings. Although, by and large, active support for local campaigns was not deep or consistent, people were willing to part with cash in order to maintain local activity. Despite the demonstrations, pickets,etc, the opposition retained a strongly individualised character. Each household decided independently whether or not to pay with little reference to outside developments. Even so, literally millions decided to risk the courts and not pay. It was this mass non-payment which finally scuppered the tax.

The role of local anti-poll tax groups was important. By simply having a public presence outside town halls or in the shopping areas, the local groups provided a focus for continued non-payment, encouragement, information, propaganda and advice. Unfortunately, in some areas the local groups became battlegrounds between competing Marxist-Leninist groups. *Militant*, the SWP and other Trotskyist groups used the movement to gain recruits, increase influence and sell papers. They manipulated, as far as they could, the movement for their own sectarian ends. Fortunately the movement was, when the occasion demanded it, big and independent enough to ignore them. The riot of March 31,1990 was an example of this.

Street Politics

The riot has been discussed in *Organise* no.19 (back copies available) so I will not dwell on it here. However, a few comments are in order. Despite all the manouevring and denunciations by *Militant* robots like Steve Nally, the riot proved to be a turning point in the campaign. The demonstration was enormous but more importantly it was angry. And this anger erupted in the near insurrectionary events of March 31. The pound wobbled on the international money markets, the country was stunned and Thatcher for the first time looked vulnerable. For her, the riot marked the beginning of the end.

It is fitting that it should have been a riot and a *poll tax* riot at that that contributed to Thatcher's downfall. It was to contain spontaneous working class anger that the government had introduced its heavily repressive Public Order Act in 1986. As such it proved to be a failure, but as a means of exacting revenge it has worked well. On the basis of the flimsiest police evidence many people have been imprisoned, especially through the magistrates courts.

Labouring under Tories

Since Thatcher's removal by an increasingly nervous and unsure Tory parliamentary party, the poll tax continued to haunt them. Given that millions of people have got out of the habit of tamely paying local taxes, *any* new tax is unacceptable. The continued attachment to the poll tax of many Tory M.P.s also caused many problems in the new leadership.

The Labour Party has played its usual role throughout. Wedded to the constitution and legality, the party at all levels urged payment of the tax. It out-Toried the Tories in its condemnation of the anti-poll tax movement. Roy Hattersley played a particularly despicable role in his calls for imprisonment of poll tax rioters. Meanwhile Kinnock in his "Toy Town revolutionaries" speech tried to show just what a good little boy he is. Ironically, Labour may lose far more than the Tories over the poll tax. Not only have millions of Labour voters disregarded the Party's advice and not paid but also many have disappeared from the electoral rolls. Finally, Labour's alternative to the tax is likely to be as unpopular as any.

Political Shift

There was a significant political shift as a result of the poll tax. The working class, dismissed by many as conservative and passive, has shown that it has the will to fight. Millions of "law-abiding" working class people are now resisting the law. Direct action outside of town halls and in Trafalgar Square has brought results and the parties of the ruling class, Tory, Labour and Liberal Democrat, are in disarray.

Just the Pits

SINCE THE 1984-85 miners strike British Coal has shut literally dozens of pits. At the time it was feared that "rationalisation" would mean the closure of seventy pits, this figure has long since been passed. Huge coal fields such as South Wales are now more or less extinct, only the scars on the landscape remain.

Interestingly, although supply has decreased, demand has not. This has meant increasing imports which come from places as diverse as Columbia and South Africa. Increasingly, coal is coming in from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. What all these countries have in common are much abused workers. British miners have always been one of the most militant sections of industry and have achieved relatively good wage rates and safety conditions through their struggles. Although still a dangerous job their comrades in other nations receive very little money and are lucky if there are any safety measures. This allows their bosses to sell it at very low prices, making it economical to ship halfway round the world. It has also been a useful means for the British Government to prop up the economies of friendly regimes such as South Africa.

Community

The closure of a pit can have substantial repercussions. When they were first opened towns developed around them. Slum conditions usually resulted from the pit owners slapping up housing at the lowest possible costs and then charging extortionate rent. Over the years community struggle improved their living conditions and other businesses moved into the area to supply the needs of the miners' families and also the colliery. When a pit is shut the whole town goes very quickly into recession, many businesses will either close or move taking any hope of alternative work with them. Once the dole queue is long enough the Government opens a business park allowing new industries to open up at very little cost. Most are hi-tech and labour intensive, they are in a position of total economic power and can force down the wages of their employees to a bare minimum. This is even assuming miners can retrain into totally different jobs. As often as not the new industries also bring in the workforce, still paying them a bare minimum on the basis that there are plenty of unemployed people in the area prepared to do the job.

Votes

As ecological crisis looms it is generally accepted the future of power generation is in renewables and coal's days are numbered. However, don't be fooled by the Government, their motives had nothing to do with environmental protection. In 1984 environmentalists were still seen as "annoying hippies" by the Government, there was certainly no votes in it. Their current excuse is that imported coal has less sulphur in it which they are obliged to reduce to help prevent acid rain caused partly by sulphur dioxide. This is a lie. When the agreement was reached the Government only agreed to fit Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems to six power stations by 2003. If fitted to all power stations they would have reduced sulphur emissions by 90% which experts consider would be the required amount, and would have allowed the use of British coal. However, the programme has now been scrapped altogether as costs were too great to be borne by the newly privatised generating companies. Their figures only agreed to hold emissions at 1988 levels by 2003 – fifteen years to achieve nothing. They believed they could con the public by using low sulphur coal and increasing nuclear power which unfortunately for them and fortunately for us now lies in tatters. And is it really ecologically sound to ship a commodity halfway round the world that you have in abundance under your feet.

Offensive

The miners strike was purely about smashing a militant section of the working class. As early as 1980 a leaked Government document was proposing massive increases in nuclear power to stave off strike action by miners or transport workers, and of course when the strike came, power stations were readily stocked with coal for months. The ruling class were allowed to go on the offensive and have been running rampage on the mining industry ever since. When closure comes now, many miners welcome it, fed up of a shit job and being treated like shit by bosses.

The industry has virtually been stripped to its most profitable bare minimum and will inevitably be privatised soon. Miners need to regroup quickly and organise for this new onslaught. Also other workers must learn the lessons. Transport workers still haven't felt the full force of the state ranged against them, but there is evidence that the Tories are manoeuvring for them and workers are increasingly angry at years of abuse. If this develops into confrontation let's make sure this is not another isolated struggle, but that the State feels the full force of Class War!

MOHAWKS CONFRONT THE STATE

Last August in Canada, some four thousand troops and fourteen hundred armoured vehicles of the Canadian Army confronted native Mohawk people of the Kanesatake reservation in Oka, Quebec.

The events leading up to the crisis in Oka started on 9th March, 1990 when the municipality of Oka village declared an official lifting of a moratorium on golf course expansion. The golf course in question, along with threatened condominium construction was to extend across areas of forest known to the Mohawks as "The Pines" – land that has always been occupied by the Mohawk people. When the Canadian government realised that the Mohawks were prepared to stand determinedly for their right to their home, the Army was hurriedly called in and the tear gas, concussion grenades and automatic weapons of the provincial police were replaced with the razor wire, trenches and heavily armed troops and tanks of the Army, which invaded Oka on 20th August.

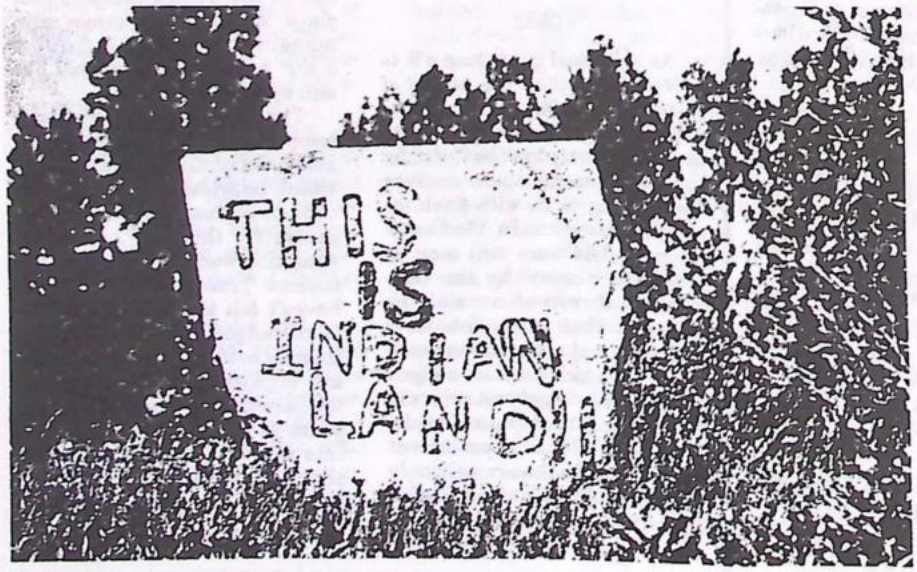
SOLIDARITY

Such a stand against the system was naturally condemned by the Canadian government officials, namely Robert Bourassa (Premier of Quebec) and Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister). However the Mohawks of Kanesatake did not fight alone – on the contrary, North America's native populations shook with indignation at the government's military stance against the Mohawks. Those Mohawks living on the nearby reservations of Kahnawake and Akwesane (Akwesane is in New York State, United States, and is spread across the US/Canada border) joined the struggle at Kanesatake in large numbers. Ojibwas blocked Canadian National Railway tracks (running through their reserves) stopping traffic for 5 days at Longlac and White River, Ontario – and on an Oneida reserve, a hydro-electric cable tower collapsed after an explosion. All of this was held in identification with the Mohawks cause and demonstrations and petitions continued throughout the year until finally after an incredible standoff of 78 days, Mohawks left their strongholds and walked into Oka Village as a defiant act of protest. They were then "contained" by Canadian soldiers with bayonets and eventually taken in busloads to a Farnham military base south of Montreal – men, women and children – all to face the hospitality of a hardly compassionate system.

RESISTANCE

Protests like these often ending in bloodshed, have been carried out all over America on countless occasions and they continue just as frequently today, well after the "end to Indian resistance" with the last tribes penned up in reservations. In 1969, Native Americans occupied the island of Alcatraz for two years to draw international attention to their plight. In 1971, members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) organised a march on Washington where they occupied and destroyed offices at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and in 1973 the famous occupation of Wounded Knee Village (where a massacre of 350 Sioux was carried out by U.S. soldiers and were consequently surrounded for 72 days by the police and military.

Whether it be against nuclear plants, hydro-electric dams, uranium mining, casinos and drug/alcohol dealing – all of which have been established on Indian reservations throughout North America against both the will of the Indians and most of the neighbouring white community – American Indians and their white supporters have fought strong and hard, and will continue to do so as long as the international system of vicious capitalism operates which shrouds all our lives. This system is in contradiction to what Indian societies have to offer. Although the North American tribes all possess widely differing cultures, rich in all aspects but peculiar to each individual community – they share a common philosophy regarding existence that helps and encourages those of us who fight against a terrible system. We can learn from these philosophies whose starting point is the perspective that reveres the land and all fellow beings (human and animal alike) the mountains, rivers, trees and sky. The mass destruction of people when greed and profit have become priorities must be inevitable unless there is a continual fight against capitalism. The principles behind traditional Native American living can only spur on that fight – principles that were known before corrupt and ugly class systems took hold.



"The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

contd. p. 7

Ecology and Survivalism

THE TERM "SURVIVALISM" usually refers to people going out into the wilds and living through a nuclear war or similar catastrophe by using their survival skills. However, in recent years the term has taken on a new meaning.

Survivalism is capitalism's response to the growth in concern and awareness of environmental issues. Ecology, once seen as a marginal concern, has, at the level of appearances, been taken to the heart of capitalism. Why is this?

The present ecological crisis is the inheritance of centuries of tyranny and exploitation in which the mass of humanity, as workers, peasants, slaves and soldiers, have been used by a small elite as mere tools in the accumulation of wealth. In the

process the eco-systems of the planet have been torn apart to meet the demands of a system based on the endless pursuit of profit and power in which natural resources are simply there to be exploited. Used as commodities they are bought, sold and used up.

Undermine

A growing awareness of ecology seen from this perspective could have the potential to undermine the acceptance of a society founded upon hierarchy and exploitation. This is why capitalism needs to be seen to be embracing ecological ideas. In doing so it is able to redefine the ecological problem in terms which pose no threat to its existence and actually increase its strength.

Through the media, consumerism and politics, the ecological problem is phrased as one of survival within the capitalist system rather than a transcendence of that system. In the rhetoric of survivalism we are all responsible, regardless of class, race or gender, for environmental problems and must all "do our bit for the environment".

Operating in a similar way to nationalism, survivalism masks social differences in an attempt to create a false social unity in the pursuit of shared interests. Through the media we are constantly sent the message that it is our unquestionable duty to be Green. We all have a role to play to ensure the survival of the planet. And what is that role for the working class? The same old shit – work, consume and vote.

Commodity

For the consumer, ecology itself has been turned into a commodity to be bought from the supermarket shelf. As a marketing tool it makes offers of "10% More!" or "Buy 2 get 1 free!" pale in comparison to the prospect of saving the planet by buying "Ozone Friendly" hairspray.

At the next general election we can look forward to the spectacle of the major parties trying to prove how Green they are, how the environment is safe only in their hands. It is a sick joke that the same parties will also be arguing that they will be best at competing with other industrialised nations and increasing productivity. There are even those within the Green Party who welcome this Green window-dressing since, they argue, they force the other parties to adopt environmental policies to avoid losing voters to the Green Party.

Apart from the fact that leaving the environment to governments and multinational corporations is "like leaving a child batterer to look after the nursery", voting for Green policies to be carried out by the state is a thoroughly disempowering act which does a lot to bolster the strength of the state and little, if anything, to protect the environment.

The basic purpose of survivalism is to hide the social, political and historical causes of the ecological problem and to incorporate environmental awareness into its own economic logic.

Explicit

As anarchists, in our propaganda, we should make explicit the real causes of the environmental problems we face. However, we should not argue solely on the basis that revolutionary change is the only alternative to ecological disaster but also talk of what action people can take here and now.

We should also make it clear that for us survival in itself is not enough. We aim for the complete transcendence of capitalist society and all forms of domination and exploitation and for a society in which production is geared toward genuine need and produce freely distributed. In such a society we would be free of the alienating boredom and drudgery of work, competition and consumerism.

MOHAWKS contd.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters: the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony – all belong to the same family.

All things are connected.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground they spit upon themselves. Continue to contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste".

Chief Seattle, Suquamish tribe, Washington 1854.

ANC-New Bosses

The level of corruption, brutality and bureaucracy within the ranks of the African National Congress and its armed wing the Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) point to what the black working class of South Africa have in store for them once the ANC assumes power.

The ANC has constantly attempted to monopolise the struggle against the apartheid regime since the fifties, seeking to marginalise and belittle its rivals, the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). Its mixture of old-style African nationalist politics with a good dose of Stalinism from the ranks of the South African Communist Party make a most unappetising cocktail for the poor and dispossessed.

Young

Many young working class blacks identified with the armed struggle of the ANC against the Boer regime. This was particularly so after the Soweto uprising of 1976, when many high school students and apprentices fled into exile to join Umkhonto.

But instead of armed struggle against the Afrikaaner state, units of these young people were employed as auxiliaries by nationalist groups in other countries, in particular in ZAPU's struggle against the white Rhodesian regime, where heavy casualties were inflicted on them. It is also alleged that they were used against the rival nationalist organisation ZANU, which was not a Soviet client.

Those who survived the campaign complained that their equipment was inadequate, their AK47 rifles having no firing pins and their grenades no detonator fuses. And they could not help comparing their conditions and their equipment with the lifestyles of ANC leaders who were making money smuggling mandrax to South Africa and selling prestige cars in Zambia delivered by car thieves from Johannesburg. This indignation against the leadership reached its climax when Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, ordered all the "1976" militants to be trained in East Germany before being sent to help the MPLA regime in Angola against its UNITA rival.

Bleeding

These units, the 16 June Brigade, named after the first day of the Soweto uprising, were told by Tambo that "we have to bleed a little for the Angolans" – "we" that is "you". Eventually dissatisfaction came to a head with the mutiny in the Umkhonto camps in early 1984 in Angola. Fighting broke out, the Umkhonto militants demanded an end to fighting UNITA, and transfer of all their forces to fighting the South African regime. They also demanded the immediate suspension of the ANC security apparatus, as well as an investigation of its activities and of the prison camp Quatro, known as "Buchenwald". At the advice of Chris Hani, the commissar of Umkhonto, and also a Politburo member of the South African Communist Party, they formed a committee of 10 to present their grievances to the ANC leadership. This committee negotiated the surrender of arms of both the mutineers and of Mbokodo, the security apparatus that had been trained by the KGB.

Surrender

After the surrender a detachment led by Hani and Joe Modise, an Umkhonto commander and seen as one of those involved in corrupt financial ventures, swept into the camp at Viana and began arresting those involved in the mutiny. One of those arrested, an Umkhonto veteran, Mwezi Twala, was shot in the back. He recovered and was sent to a labour camp in Angola, where during the course of detention he witnessed the torture and murder of hundreds of Umkhonto militants. He is now among those in hiding in South Africa who have borne witness against these atrocities, and have put their stories on videos which are being distributed in the townships.

Mandela United

What went on in the military camps and prisons of the ANC is directly related to the necklace killings used by the ANC in South Africa, first of all in the 1984-6 uprising, against informers and police agents, but now increasingly against opposition groups like AZAPO. And it is directly related to the recent trial of Winnie Mandela and her Mandela United Football Team. This group of thugs acted in exactly the same way as the Mbokodo. They used Winnie Mandela's house in Soweto as a base to police the township, and among their activities was the torture and murder of 14 year old Stompie Moeketsei Seipei, a township activist. Among the things that Stompie was accused of were homosexual relations with a white clergyman. South African homosexuals have taken note of

in Waiting

these attitudes within the ANC. The Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) noted that Winnie Mandela's defence said that youths had not been kidnapped by her thugs but had been taken to her house to be protected from sexual abuse by the clergyman. In a letter to the National Executive Committee of the ANC they drew attention to the disturbing level of homophobia raised by the defence and stated that the ANC had failed to respond to it, even though it was supposedly committed to gay and lesbian rights in a draft bill of rights.

Derided

Leaders of the Mass Democratic Movement publicly expressed their disquiet at Winnie Mandela's "obvious complicity" in the kidnaps and murder. Her house in Soweto is a palatial residence. Her daughter Zinzi is derided in Soweto as a "kugel" an insulting term applied to the wealthy, well-dressed young white women of the Johannesburg suburbs. Township dwellers have burnt down her previous luxurious home in disgust. Many in the townships have no illusions in Winnie Mandela,similarly many of those grassroots activists in the workplaces and townships are aware of the sell- outs engineered by Nelson Mandela and by Joe Slovo, General Secretary of the SACP.

The Afrikaaner regime shows blatant hypocrisy in putting Winnie Mandela on trial when it has so much blood on its own hands. This should not distract us from the fact that what is taking place in the ANC bodes ill for the South African working class. Already we have had the exposure of the purges carried out in Namibia by SWAPO against dissidents in its own ranks, some of whom were imprisoned in pits. The new SWAPO government has now appointed several leading South African policemen, including the ex-chief of poice in the Ovambo region, to head its own secret police. Similarly Dirk Coetzee, head of the South African government's assasination team has been welcomed into the ANC. Modise and Hani are seeking the integration of certain Umkhonto members into the South African army and police.

Fix

The ANC and SACP apparatuses are preparing to "fix" the set-up in South Africa with sections of the white ruling class, in particular the industrialists like AngloAmerican which dominates the private sector and owns 70% of the country's mining capital. In the past the ANC denounced AngloAmerican as the enemy. Now they are sitting down, all smiles, at the same table, to discuss the future.

The ANC is a government in waiting. Those in its political and military command structures are preparing to take up positions of privilege in a "new" South Africa, in alliance with the developing black capitalists, small businessmen and professionals. The SACP has already coopted the leaderships of the black unions, previously independent. One of these, Moses Mayekiso, darling of British Trotskyists like the SWP, is now a SACP member. These union leaderships will engineer the "new deal" for the sake of capitalist profitability. This future profitability will mean the crushing of workplace and township self-organisation and militancy. As a pamphlet on the ANC mutiny noted: "The ANC prison system combined the worst of South African and of Russian conditions fused together, and it is this new social type-as a refinement and augmentation of each-that is now offered to the people of South Africa as the symbol of freedom".

Denounce

We anarchist communists will always grasp the hand of the oppressed, will always denounce all those who exploit and butcher the working masses, whether they govern now or are governments and ruling classes in waiting. We do not have any starry-eyed illusions in thinking that any nationalist or national liberation organisation can bring a juster society, even if they cloak it in so-called socialist rhetoric. Remember the Khmer Rouge, feted by many in the European extreme left. Remember the blind eyes turned on the barbarism of Stalinism, by those in the West, both intellectuals and workers, who somehow thought that communism had been achieved in Eastern Europe and China. We are deeply saddened by the way noble young working class people, the class of 76, have been used and abused by the ANC apparatus. We will continue to argue for a just, genuine communist system, that is, anarchist communism.

(The pamphlet mentioned above, *Mutiny in the ANC, 1984, as told by five of the mutineers* can be obtained at £1.50 from Bill McElroy, 17 Tudor House, Tudor Grove, London E.9 7QS)

Imperialism and the Kurds

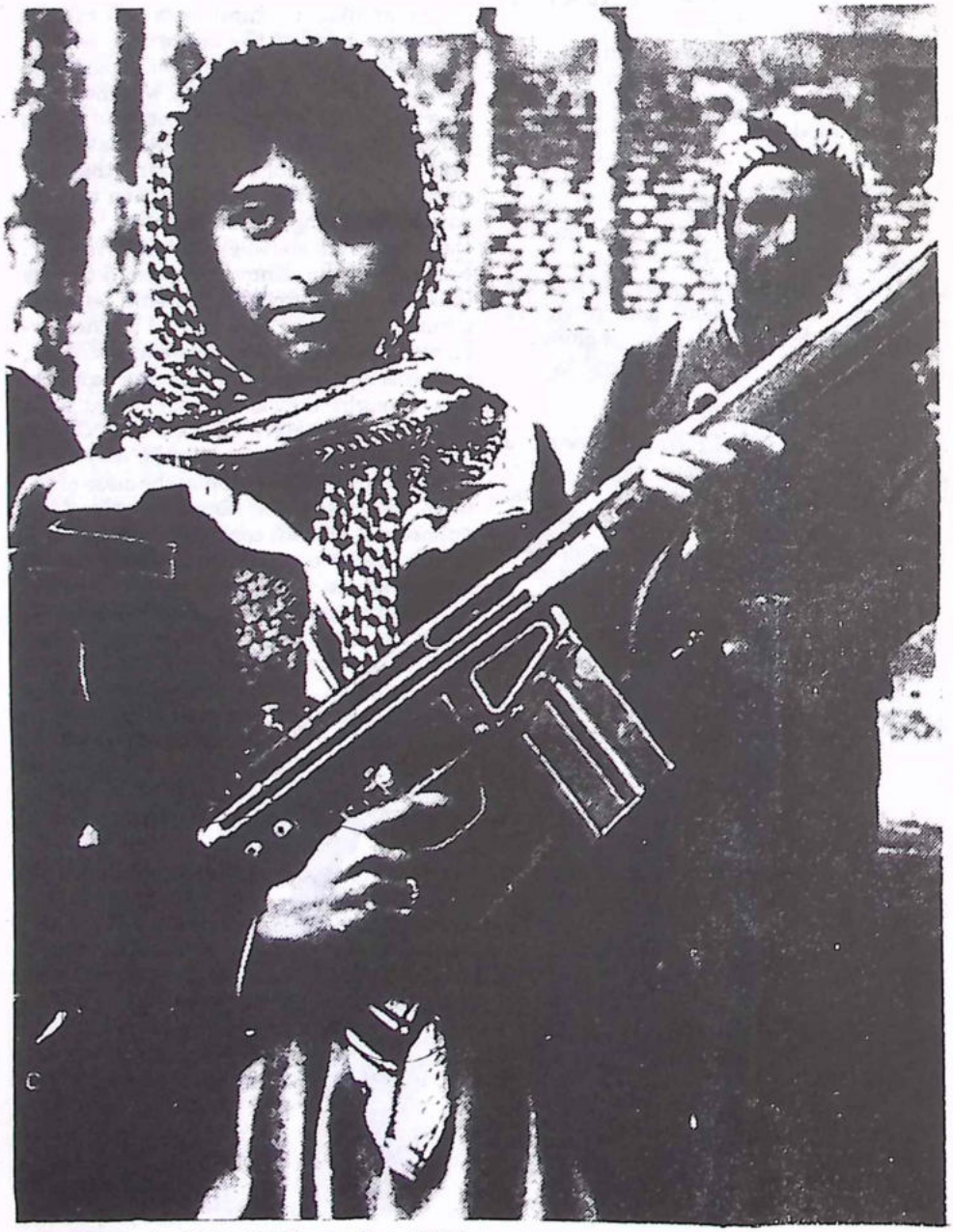
WHEN THE RULING class starts showing "solidarity with oppressed people" to the extent that their plight reaches the front page of the *Daily Mail*, we as anarchist-communists should smell a rat. Humanitarianism is not part of the ruling class' ideology – remember their humanitarian concern for the "people of Kuwait" and what that led to?

The concern of the ruling class for the Kurdish people proves a number of things. Firstly, that the propaganda war against Iraq is not yet over. The ruling class selectively choose to care about the Kurds because they can be identified as separate from other Iraqis, meanwhile the whole of Iraq is under martial law, the whole Iraqi population lives in fear for their lives.

Imperialism has often used a cover of "concern for oppressed people" to hide their real goals. Care for Jews after World War Two led to the establishment of a permanent imperialist base in the Middle East (Zionist Israel) at the expense of the Palestinians. Imperialists again and again use "oppressed people" as an excuse to wage wars. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait for the Palestinians. The Allies invaded Kuwait and Iraq for the Kuwaitis – but the expansionist aims of imperialism are always laid bare.

"Oppressed people" have also been regularly used to fight wars; armed, supported and then dropped by ruling classes when their own imperialist aims are satisfied. For example, in 1972 the Kurds were armed by the USA to fight Iraq for the Shah of Iran, in 1975 their cause was dropped, supplies cut off and 35,000 died in Iraq.

At the start of the Kurdish and Shi'a uprisings in Iraq it was obvious the world's ruling class did not want them to succeed, the Iranian and Turkish borders remained closed stopping supplies vital to the insurrectionaries. At present it is obvious that the Allies, Turkey and Iran would rather see a weak Ba'athist Iraq than a Kurdish state. However, that is not to say that an independent "Kurdistan" could not arise out of the present crisis, the amount of coverage their "plight" is being allowed to have suggests this.



Learning Lessons

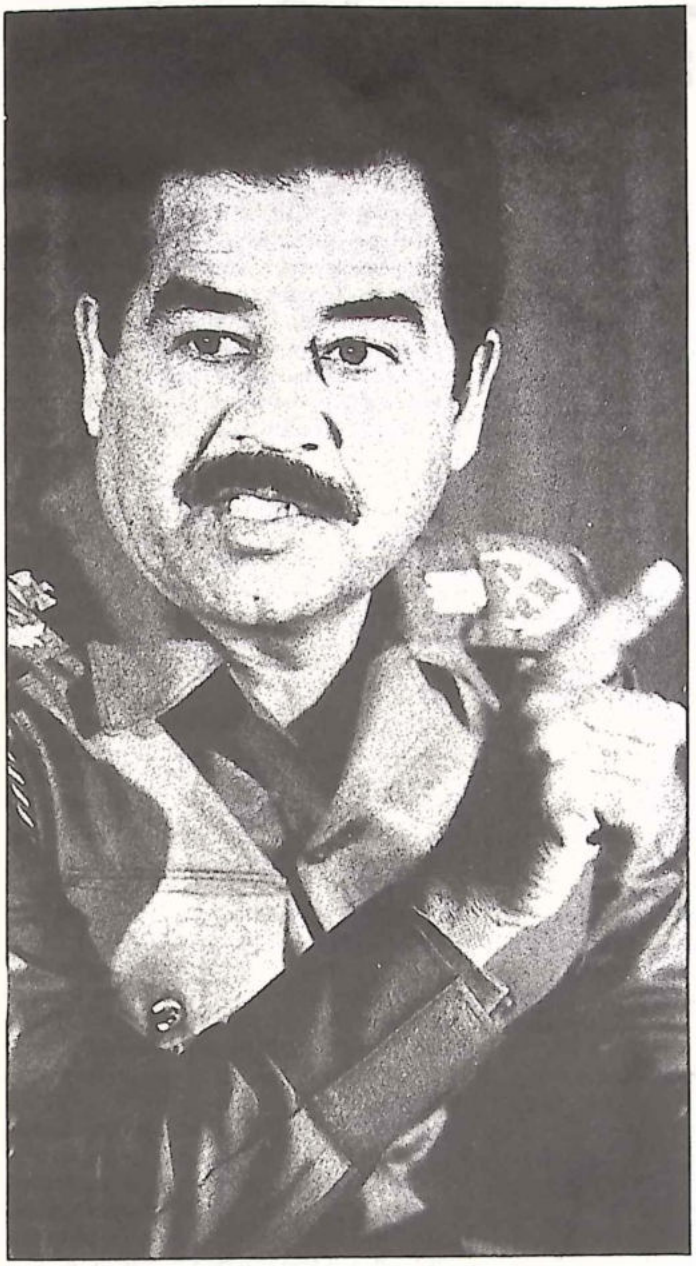
But Kurdish working people should know better than to ask the Allies and the world ruling class for assistance, their own history, and the history of imperialism in the region should convince them of that. If a Kurdish state is allowed to grow in the Middle East it will be on imperialism's terms, as an imperialist base between Syria, Iran and Iraq three of the most powerful and potentially unruly Middle Eastern states, and of course, next to the ever loyal servant of the West; Turkey. This "success" for Kurdish national liberation will not be celebrated by anarchist communists.

As anarchist-communists we should not ignore the plight of the Kurds, but we should not succumb to the pathetic Kurdish fetishism of the left. We recognise that all the working peoples of the Middle East are oppressed, in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Egypt...the creation of a new state, further dividing the Middle Eastern masses will not solve a thing.

National Liberation

The failure of the Kurdish revolt against Saddam Hussein illustrates the inevitable political and military flaws in national liberation struggles. Despite the rhetoric, the revolt remained purely national, no attempt was made to push into non- Kurdish areas of Iraq to challenge Saddam Hussein's power there. The struggle was not generalized, Arabs living in the new "Free Kurdistan" were kicked out by the Peshmergas and sent south – anyone speaking Arabic rather than Kurdish was under immediate suspicion of being a Ba'athist spy.

The Kurdish leaders seemed happy to simply wait for the United Nations to recognise their state and despite their military and strategic strength they left Sad-



dam Hussein time to reorganise, re-group and crush them.

Now they seem to be coming to an agreement with Saddam where they will share power with him and where the Peshmerga guerillas will disarm and be merged with the Iraqi army.

Class Country

The Kurdish leaders are not interested in the well-being of the mass of the Kurdish people, the workers and peasants. They wish to construct a Kurdish state and to improve the power and bargaining strength of their own class, the bourgeoisie. They will use the Peshmergas as their police, to crush any sign of discontent amongst the Kurdish masses. In talking about a deal with Saddam, they show they are prepared to aid and indeed to be incorporated into the Iraqi state set-up of the military and national bourgeoisie and that they are part of the same class, the class of rulers and oppressors.

INTERVIEW WITH IRAQI EXILE

***ORGANISE!* What are the main political groups in Iraq?**

The Kurdish Democratic Party were set up as a feudal party in 1946. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) are a nationalistic party who have support among Kurds, especially in Sulaymanyah and Arbil; they claim to be building a party based on Marxist-Leninist ideology. They started a guerilla armed struggle in 1961 to crush the unity of the Arab-Kurdish working class struggle in Iraq officially "represented" by the Communist Party.

The Communist Party is traditionally the strongest party. Stalinist from the beginning, it is "anti-imperialist", for social reforms such as land for peasants, better wages for workers and more participation for women. It has large support especially in Baghdad, Arbil, Kirkuk, and the south of Iraq. In the 1958 uprising they successfully channelled the people's demands for a purge of the police and armed forces and weapons for popular armed struggle. The CP told them to tone down their demands and support the "progressive" provisional government of Abdul Karim Kasim. There was a revolution in the streets but the government was left untouched: the military and bureaucratic machine was left untouched. In the 1963 coup many active CP members and leftwingers were slaughtered. As in Allende's Chile the CP fostered illusions in a "radical" government rather than working class self-organisation, with the same bloody consequences. This is the price people always have to pay for following Marxist-Leninist parties.

***ORGANISE!* What about the Kurds and the present revolt.**

It is a mistake to talk of the "Kurds", as nationalist mystification – there is a Kurdish working class and a Kurdish ruling class – another flag, another seat in the United Nations is not progress. The ruling class want the working class to be divided nationalistically as Kurds, Arabs etc. People should have their own evolving culture – language, music, literature, etc. – but not use it to suppress other cultures and races through building nationalism and the State around it. During the Iran-Iraq and Gulf Wars, Iraqi soldiers fought other Arabs, this is contrary to the Arab nationalist ideology of the ruling Ba'athist Party. As a result Ba'athist ideology has collapsed, leaving a vacuum which the opposition parties are eager to fill. The Iraqi bourgeoisie are siding with the revolt for their own advantage: the economy has been crippled by the war and international sanctions, and the working class and poor don't have money to buy things. The Ba'athists can't revive the economy, so, like the U.S. they want to remove Saddam without breaking up the Iraqi state. Unfortunately most people still believe in the "need" for leaders and parties, even during uprisings.

***ORGANISE!* What is the role and influence of religion?**

60% of the population are Shi'ite: it is the dominant religion in Iran, which Sad-

INTERVIEW WITH IRAQI EXILE

dam uses to say that the revolt in the south was made by outsiders. The rest of Iraq is Sunni, including the Kurds. There are also 1 million Christians. Most of the high-ups in the military and government are Sunni, which is the dominant religion of Islam covering Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan. Sadun Hamadi, a Shi'ite, was made Prime Minister after the Gulf War to placate Shi'ite people. The government uses religion to divide and rule. The media worldwide have characterised the revolt in the south as religious – Shi'ite versus Sunni and in the north as nationalistic, Kurds versus Arabs.

***ORGANISE!* What is the make-up of the Iraqi economy?**

Iraq is rich in agriculture., there are 2 big rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, and the land is very fertile. Prior to Genghis Khan's murderous regime it supported a population of 40 million people – current population is 16 million. Now most people are concentrated in cities. The agricultural economy has been almost totally destroyed in favour of oil, 90% of the national income. In the 1950s Iraq had an agricultural surplus and exported food. Now virtually all food requirements need to be imported. Oil is swapped for arms, food and machinery. The countryside no longer exists – in the 1980s 4,000 villages were razed to the ground and the population were forced to go to the cities where there were few jobs. As a result many joined the "security" forces or government guerilla mercenaries through economic conscription.

***ORGANISE!* What were the causes of the Gulf War?**

The Iraqi army is very powerful due to its historical role in repressing the working class and poor. It has provided a big market for arms manufacturers. Iraq has been the world's largest importer of arms over the last five years, 1984-1988, accounting for over 9%-$16 billion of the $174 billion spent by countries.

The worldwide economic recession was also a cause – military spending is a crucial part of the American economy. The Gulf War revamped a sector undermined and threatened by the end of the Cold War. There is increasing evidence that the U.S. planned the war months before Kuwait was a twinkle in Saddam's eye. In the summer of 1990 detailed war plans were drawn up by the U.S. military and Bush advised a meeting of top U.S. businessmen to delay investing in the area.

The Gulf War commemorations – like all others – are to remind poor people all over the world what the future will hold. They are to glorify war and the nation state rather than the bitter reality that poor people live and die as slaves.

1916 –

THE 75th ANNIVERSARY of the Easter Rising saw little "official" celebration in Ireland this year. It's no surprise of course to see the Fianna Fail-Progressive Democrat Government try to distance themselves from the celebrations as much as was decently possible. After all they could hold no desire to remember the fact that their constitutional state has its roots in a very unconstitutional armed insurrection.

Sinn Fein and the Republican Movement however did mobilise nationally to commemorate the "blood sacrifice" of 1916, a milestone in the political heritage they legitimately claim as their own. But what do anarchist communists have to say about all this? Do we, like Sinn Fein, consider the "call of 1916" to be the challenge of today?

Insurgents

First we must look at the nature and objectives of the Easter insurgents. The rising was led by the middle class nationalists of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Volunteers, supported by some smaller groupings, notably the Irish Citizens Army, a workers' militia originally formed to defend strikers in struggle with Dublin's intransigent bosses in the 1913 lock-out, a struggle which, not surprisingly, received no support from the Nationalist movement.

Their aim, stated in their "proclamation" to the people of Ireland, was the creation of a "sovereign independent state", an Irish republic. The proclamation declared the right of the Irish people to the ownership of Ireland and resolved to "pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation". Civil and religious liberty, equal rights and opportunities for all citizens! Pretty much the slogans of all bourgeois republican revolutions since 1789.

Capitalism

But are we just being too cynical perhaps? No. Just look at the actions of the First Dail, Sinn Fein's colours were exposed in their determination to create and maintain an independent sovereign Irish capitalism and to defend the power of the native boss class, as we shall show later.

Of today's IRA claim to be "the same now as then" – we agree. The rebels of 1916 represented not the proletarian movement but the petit-bourgeoisie. Then as now the foot soldiers of this republican movement are working class.

Connolly

But what of the presence of the Irish Citizen Army and the socialist James Con-

A Myth Exploded

nolly? Didn't their involvement give the uprising a proletarian aspect? Sinn Fein have certainly emphasised the Connolly/I.C.A. involvement, a reflection of their socialist pretensions. *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (March 28th) features an article 'James Connolly – The Practical Visionary' which attempts to explain Connolly's decision to line up beside the Nationalists. It is argued that rather than abandoning his socialism in order to join the uprising, this was a tactic he employed in order to put socialism on the agenda in the proposed Democratic Republic. There is certainly evidence to support this argument, not least Connolly's advice that the I.C.A. hold onto their guns in the event of victory.

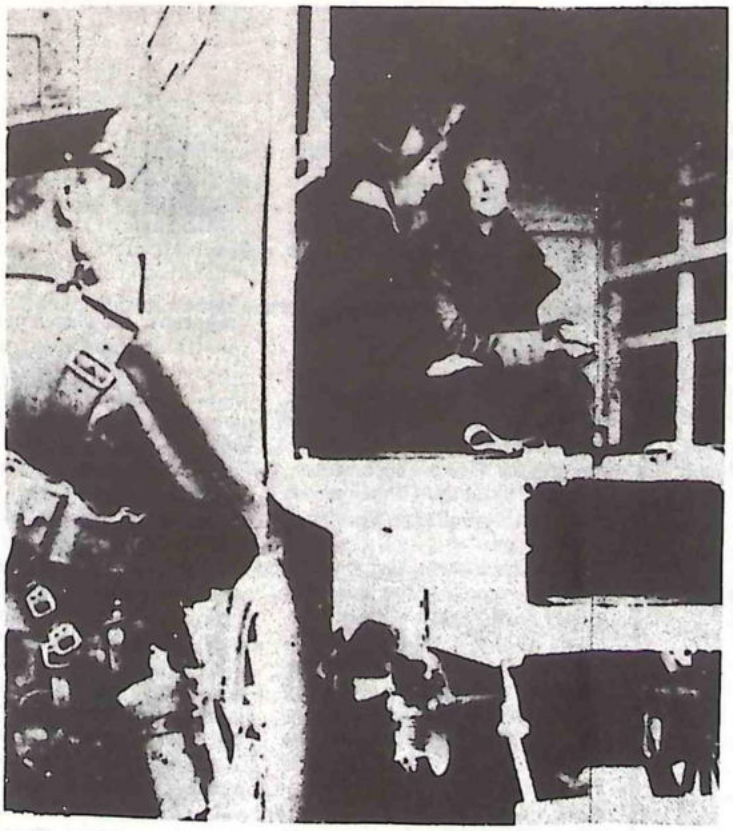
Irish Citizen Army

Weakness

However, if this was his belief then history has proven him wrong, very wrong. Just before his barbaric execution Connolly is reported to have said "The socialists will never understand why I am here". Indeed, we do not need to scapegoat Connolly, his leading of the I.C.A. into a cross-class alliance was a product of the weaknesses of the Irish Socialist Movement. Not least its tendency to be swayed by charismatic leaders but also its failure to maintain a revolutionary class perspective.

Soviets

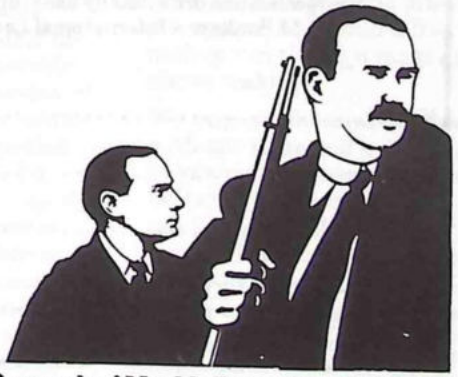
Rather than Easter 1916, anarchist communists look to the class struggle which swept Ireland from 1916-22 for inspiration. The same *An Phoblacht* article talks approvingly of this revolutionary wave, usually ignored by republicans and revisionists alike. This period of immense struggle saw the seizure of land, general strikes in many localities, soviets formed in Limerick and Cork, workers taking control of their workplaces and raising the red flag of socialism across the south. The article fails to mention, however, the role of the I.R.A. in smashing the Quarterstown Mills Soviet occupation, or the Sinn Fein land courts handing land seized in Co. Wexford back to the big land owners, or of the heroine of 1916 the Countess Markiewicz' warnings against "the imminence of social revolution". It wouldn't sit too well with their socialism we fear.



MARKIEWICZ being taken to jail

Revolution

But it's just that kind of social revolution that must be fought for in Ireland, north and south, today. A fight against all bosses, foreign or native and all states, no matter what flag flies above their prisons. The challenge of 1916 must be to learn that the working class has no allies, in any section of the boss class, no matter how radical their rhetoric. Let's rise to that challenge – the fight for a free communist Ireland!



Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism.

The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours.

The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Join us!

With the crisis of Leninism, the continuing disillusionment with the Labour Party and the increasing parliamentary greyness of the greens, revolutionary anarchist ideas are more relevant and necessary.

There has been increasing interest in anarchist ideas and growth in groups recently since the anti-poll tax battles outside the town halls and the Trafalgar Square victory. Similarly, the growth of the anarchist movement in countries like Poland, Germany, Greece and Bulgaria have attracted attention. Many people are now searching for a set of ideas that challenges the present obscene system of exploitation and does not think that outside the market and state controlled economies there are no alternatives. We urge all those who are seriously seeking a revolutionary alternative to consider the ideas of anarchist communism and to join us in the fight for a just, sane and free society.

Building

There has been an increase in the number of those who describe themselves as class struggle anarchists. Unfortunately, many do not look beyond their own back-yard. They think that the building of a local group is sufficient and fail to see the need for an effective united organisation on a national level, one that would reverse the trend of isolation and dispersed practice,one that would begin to offer a credible alternative to the miserable hierarchical vanguardist outfits that pose as revolutionary. Such an organisation would begin to make its presence known through the establishment of international links, and effective propaganda and action, whilst developing its theory in a lively dynamic way in interaction with practice. We don't claim to be that organisation, but we have that goal in mind.

The ACF works towards a social revolution, not to seize power itself, but participating in a revolutionary process as working class people, to assist the class as a whole to destroy the present system and build a free society run through mass decision making.

We urge all those who agree with our aims and principles to join our organisation, the better to take part in this coming about. Write to our national address for details. Apply for membership now. We've been on the defensive for too long – let's build a mass movement that goes on the attack!

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has once again hit the headlines with the recent cyclone. Over 125,000 people have lost their lives and 10 million people are homeless. Cyclones are not new to Bangladesh; there were 37 such cyclones between 1960-1981 with 386,200 killed. In 1974, Bangladesh was at the centre of media attention when famine killed an unofficially estimated 1 million people.

These events, helped by the presentation in the media, lead people to believe that Bangladesh is naturally prone to such disasters. Many in the West have grown accustomed to see large death figures associated with Bangladesh and either ignore it or put the relief agencies into operation yet again and appeal for aid for the "poor victims". However Bangladesh is not, in fact, the only country in the world to experience cyclones. The U.S.A.,Caribbean and the Pacific all have regular storms which are a feature of the tropics. The difference is in the amount of lives lost. The Philippines had 39 cyclones between 1960 and 1981 but had only 5,650 dead. In Darwin, Australia only 49 people died in a similar cyclone to the one in Bangladesh.

Poor

The Philippines has a longer coastline than Bangladesh, but it is well-protected by reefs, mangroves and trees. Bangladesh's coastline is not so protected because of deforestation and erosion. Poor peasants have chopped down the trees both on the plains and up in the Himalayas in their desperation to make a living in a system where much of their crop is given to absentee landlords.

The result is an exposed flood plain that is defenceless against cyclones coming in from the ocean and floods descending from the mountains. The peasants do not have the means to build elaborate flood protection devices and do not want to leave the cyclone-prone areas because there is nothing for them anywhere else.

Cyclone

The Philippines and Australia are countries with a more highly developed infrastructure. The Philippines have better communications, an early warning system and a community help organisation. In Darwin,the emergency service was able to evacuate almost the entire population before the cyclone hit. Therefore the richer the country, the better able it is to save lives. The same applies when examining who actually dies within a country. In general, the poorer the people, the more likely they are to be the victims.

In La Paz, Mexico most of the 1976 cyclone victims lived in the shanty towns outside the city. Poor people are less likely to have protection, to be warned or evacuated in the event of an emergency.

Usual

The usual appeals have been made for relief aid. The rich pat themselves on the back because of their great "generosity". But there are several questions to be asked in relation to this relief aid. Firstly, the media gives the impression that disaster victims are helplessly waiting for the West to come to their aid. In fact, local people quickly organise themselves, to help each other survive and to rebuild. It is the victims who do most of the work and who bear the expense. Aid agencies often do not know the local conditions and provide totally inappropriate aid.

For example, pork sausages were sent to the Moslem Kurds, tea, tissues and tampax were provided by one British charity, and the EEC once sent powdered milk to a place where cows were plentiful but where there was no water.

These may be unintentional errors but aid is also a political weapon used much more cynically. Certain countries are more likely to receive aid than others. In 1973, the USA sent $2.2 billion in relief to Israel during the Yom Kippur war, but only $130 million to help the countries in the Sahel famine.

Protection

In the same period a not so pro-American leftist government in Bangladesh clashed with the USA over food and in the year preceding the 1974 famine, food aid dropped by 83%. The USA insisted that Bangladesh stop exporting jute to Cuba and allow for more private sector investment. While negotiations were going on, people were dying in famines and floods. The government of Bangladesh soon gave in to the US demands.

Saudi Arabia is providing $100 million of the $137 million in aid so far collected for Bangladesh. Their "generosity" was justified in terms of helping their "Moslem brothers". If the cyclone had hit Buddhist Thailand, the $100 million would not have been forthcoming.

Natural

Natural disasters like cyclones, earthquakes and volcano eruptions are not something that people can do away with. However, death and hardship could be avoided if protection of the environment and of the mass of the people were a priority. However the system that dominates the globe is able to mobilise vast resources for war and destruction but is unable to make more than a token effort to save thousands of people from death. It has no *interest* in doing so. In the Gulf War, oil and strategic and economic interests were worth both billions of dollars and thousands of lives.

The people dead in Bangladesh have no such value to the world's rulers. It is easy to dismiss what happened in Bangladesh as another natural disaster but the only real disaster is capitalism and we are all its victims.

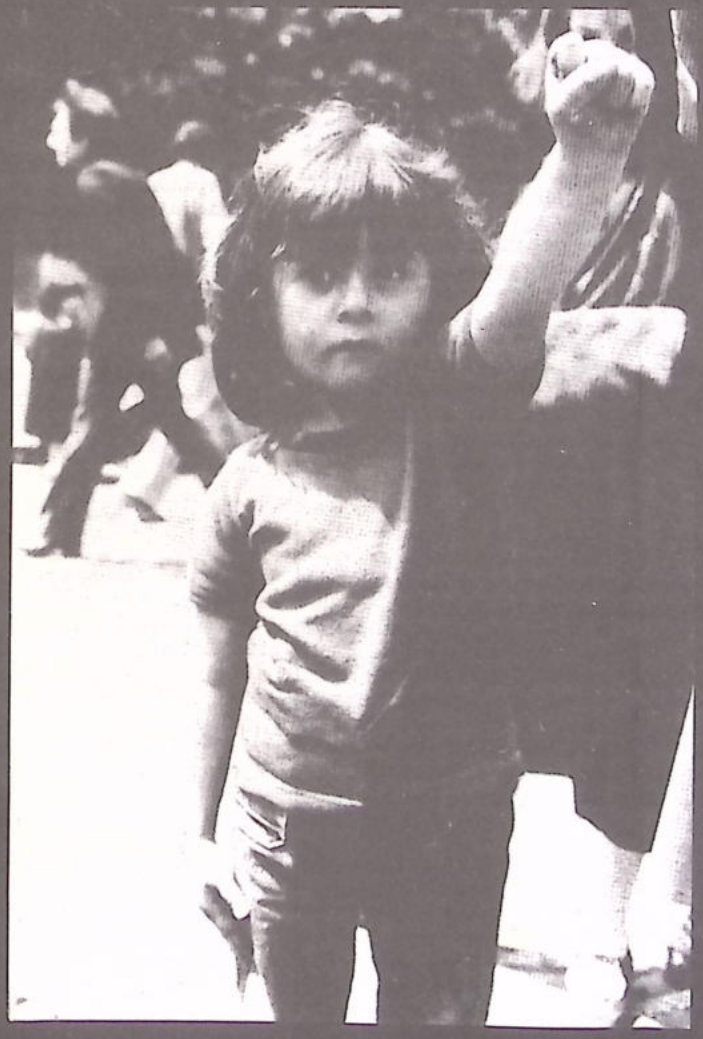
T/SOR/1619

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

40p
Oct-Dec
1991
Issue 24

INFANTILE DISORDER



SOVIET UNION
CLAUSE 25
CHILDREN
SOUTH AFRICA
MILITANT
BCCI
NEW WORLD ORDER
REVIEWS
LETTERS
NEW SERIES: ASPECTS OF ANARCHISM

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by **ACF** members unless signed. Some reflect **ACF** policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

The next issue will be out in early January. The deadlines are November 16th for features and reviews, and November 30th for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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THE PRESS FUND exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of *Organise!* Money is always needed for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. We also want to see *Organise!* produced more frequently, with more pages and with a greater print run. Money is also needed to finance more pamphlets.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

£100 — London; £5 — Bristol; £10 — Newcastle; £34 — Rugby. Meanwhile, if there are any socially aware millionaire revolutionaries about...

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WE FEEL THAT *Organise!* has an important role to play in the growth of revolutionary activity and ideas in these exciting times. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

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Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

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THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:

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The **ACF** promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally and has contact with like-minded anarchists overseas.

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Newcastle rioter

"We urge anarchist communist comrades to join the Labour Party so they can leave in disgust and join us in the SWP"
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Due to the massive demand for our excellent pamphlets, they are currently all out of print. We hope to bring new titles out in the near future as well as reprints of some of our out of print titles. We are hoping to launch a subscription process for specific titles, similar to Phoenix Press. Meanwhile, watch this space.

Organise! Back Issues

Back issues of *Organise!* (from issue 14 to issue 23 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 40p & sae each and include:

- *Organise!* 18: Eastern Europe; ambulance crews; Gerry Healy's death.
- *Organise!* 19: Poll tax and prison riots; Mandela myth; ecology and class.
- *Organise!* 20: Class struggle in Ireland; Romania; poll tax update.
- *Organise!* 21: Gulf war; Russia in crisis; Brixton.
- *Organise!* 22: Recession; poll tax; warfare state; Commune; Asia.
- *Organise!* 23: Iraq Interview; Greens; ANC; pits; police

Iron Felix in the Scrapyard — Piggies Go to Market

THE RECENT FAILED coup in the Soviet Union was a final attempt by the Stalinist section of the ruling class to regain control. It ushered in the collapse of the empire which had been taken over lock, stock and barrel from Tsarism. It further opened the road to re-entry of the Eastern European bloc into the capitalist market.

The coup was sparked off by the increasing autonomy of the republics, to be made official by a treaty agreed by Gorbachev. Gorbachev's frantic manoeuvring led him into an alliance with Boris Yeltsin who represents an alternative section of the Russian ruling class, a section which wants to speed up entry into the market. For his part, Gorbachev wanted to hold together the Soviet Union and preserve the dominant role of the Communist Party, whilst granting some economic and political reforms. He attempted a balancing act between the two opposing sections of the Soviet ruling class.

Failure

The coup showed the extent to which this strategy has failed. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, due to its implication in the coup was forced to be dissolved by Gorbachev. Many republics outlawed their local Communist Parties. Now Gorbachev is a political captive of the Yeltsin group, and will remain so, until he is made completely redundant by the continuing process of disintegration.

The coup failed because of the huge splits and confusion within the Soviet ruling class. This confusion showed itself in the lack of determination and decisiveness by the coup leaders. They failed to shoot Gorbachev immediately, they failed to round up opponents of their line like Yeltsin and Shevardnadze. They argued over what degree of repression they should use.

The confusion in the ranks of the bureaucrats was reflected in the ranks of the repressive apparatus of the State, the KGB, police, and army, with KGB commanders refusing to obey the orders of their superiors,and disaffection amongst the soldiers. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was itself affected by this confusion. Gorbachev was held captive by those he had appointed to leading positions. His own deputy, Yanayev, was implicated, as was the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Defence, the Minister of the Interior and the chief of the KGB. They had talked with Gorbachev about imposing a state of emergency. Indeed, Gorbachev may have used the coup in an attempt to strengthen his own hand, an attempt which backfired. Yeltsin too, almost certainly knew about the preparation of the coup and deliberately delayed in taking action against the plotters, so that he could strengthen his hand by counting on popular indignation after any violence from them. He may have done a deal with the plotters so he could provoke them into action and profit from the repercussions.

Yeltsin is now in a dominant position. But if the Soviet working class have any illusions in him, they will soon be shattered. He is not their friend, he is a member of the same class that repressed and butchered workers for the last 70 years. He has often manoeuvred to support workers' action, like the miners' strike in March, to protect his own position from the Stalinist wing. This is purely tactical, as he is just as capable of demanding repressive action against strikes. He called for an end to the strikes after making a deal with Gorbachev and supported an anti-strike law. He used the threat of this law to head off a strike by Russian metal workers.

He and his allies, like Shevardnadze, (experienced in repression in Georgia) wish to change the way the bureaucratic ruling class operate. He wants a turn to the Western style of exploitation with local factory bosses as entrepreneurs. He is in a strong position now, but the result of this will not be better times for the working class but increased unemployment, exploitation and repression. He is supported by many factory managers ready to make the change to the market as well as by the intellectuals, the media professionals and the leaders of the 'independent' unions.

The Yeltsin group hopes that this coalition of different strata will be able to head off any working class unrest. This remains to be seen. The regime of Romania used the miners to smash opposition, but now the miners have turned against it. The first signs of independent working class action in Eastern Europe may be a forerunner of a mass response to the horrors to be inflicted.

The failed coup threw the rotting Communist Parties in the West into even further disarray. Here in Britain the fragments of the once united Communist Party reacted in different ways. The EuroCommunists of the Communist Party of Great Britain, soon to transform itself into the Democratic Left, condemned the coup and supported Gorbachev. The rabid hard-liners of the New Communist Party cheered on the plotters saying that with Gorbachev's removal 'the morale of genuine communists and progressives throughout the world has risen'. But now the morale of these 'genuine' communists must now be at an all time low and their final death agony is much nearer. As for the Communist Party of Britain, their mouthpiece, the *Morning Star*, acted in its usual opportunistic way, calling the coup 'unconstitutional' whilst at the same time offering a weak criticism of Gorbachev. This was followed by a call for him to be reinstated. The CPB too will be torn by even greater internal crisis.

As for the Leninist left, the Trotskyists and others, that all rushed to distance Lenin from the growth of Stalinism, conveniently forgetting the repression that began almost immediately under the Bolsheviks. Somehow the founding of the secret police, the Cheka, the shooting and imprisonment of revolutionaries, the prison camps, the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt and the savage conditions imposed on workers and peasants was okay under Lenin but not under Stalin. They forget their 'materialist' analysis and imagine that Stalinism sprang from nowhere. With the collapse of the Stalinist monolith, the Trotskyists are scuttling to dodge any falling masonry.

The Socialist Workers Party in their paper *Socialist Worker* said that "Boris Yeltsin ...has courageously called a general strike. But workers cannot rely on him to stand firm". (*24 August 1991*) The man who had backed anti-strike laws was supported by the SWP! They argued that the working class should back the champion of the market against the plotters, that it should support one boss against another. In varying degrees this was the response of all the Trotskyists.

Hoax

Stalinism has fallen, but the working class of eastern Europe are facing the hoax of democracy. The collapse of the coup was not a triumph for working people as they stood on the sidelines, a small minority only answering Yeltsin's call for strike action. What they face now is speed-ups at work, layoffs, a rising cost of living and the butchery and dislocation that will come with the rise of the nationalist demagogues. The road ahead is dark, especially as many working people in Eastern Europe may be fooled for a time that democracy and the market will offer a better future.

It is up to us anarchist-communists, both in the West and in the East, to argue for the creation of a revolutionary alternative, a genuine communism which is based on free and collective decision- making and where production is based on need. This is anarchist-communism. A ray of light shines through the settling dust of the ruins of Stalinism — the anarchist-communist alternative. Those sincere people who have been misled by the various brands of Leninism should now seriously consider our ideas.

The Moral Crusade Continues

A MAJOR PART of the Conservative government's policies is the re-establishment of the old moral order and the sanctity of the family. They will be unable to reverse many of the great changes that have taken place in the last 30 years, but they hope to reverse some of the trends that developed from the '60s onwards when homosexuality came out of the closet. They have already passed the notorious Clause 28 introduced in 1989, and now they have Clause 25 in the new Criminal Justice Bill (published in November 1990) which they intend to enact.

Clause 28 affected the promotion of homosexuality via local councils, for example in books stocked by public libraries. Now Clause 25 will apply to sexual behaviour, attempting to police homosexual behaviour on three counts, with up to five years' imprisonment followed by five years' 'psychiatric supervision'. These three counts are:

1 Procuring of sexual acts, in other words letting two men use your spare room to commit a sexual act, or introducing two men to each other in a pub, club or at a party.

2 Indecency between men — this can be any homosexual affection in public, and could be interpreted as anything from cottaging, to kissing or holding hands.

3 Solicitation by a man — this could be interpreted as including exchanging telephone numbers, smiling, etc.

In addition to clause 25, paragraph 16 of the Children's Act guidelines was published in December 1990. This paragraph makes it impossible for lesbian or gay couples to adopt or foster children. Alongside this is an increase in the level of police harassment of gay men.

The Sexual Offences Act of 1967 was a 'liberalisation' of the attitudes of the State and ruling class towards homosexuality. It allowed for the existence of homosexuals as long as this was kept closeted. The growth of the lesbian and gay movements in the '70s led to a situation where many lesbians and gays refused to put up with this state of affairs.

Homosexuality has always existed and will continue to exist. With the rise of Christianity in Western Europe came condemnation but it was not until the rise of capitalism that it was singled out as a particular form of sexuality that was outside the norm. It was seen as a threat to the new social order and the family in particular. The rise of industry under capitalism destroyed the old forms of production. Labour was removed from the efforts of individual families and villages and concentrated in factories. A split developed between material production in these new workplaces and private labour performed mostly by women at home. Male supremacy which had long existed before capitalism, became an institutional part of capitalism. In the process the family was idealised and male workers were paid higher wages than women workers. The family became the place where the individual was valued, and the working class took on the ruling class ideal of the family as a utopian retreat from the horrors of life from the workplaces.

At the same time, the family became the place where workers were serviced and where capitalism could ensure it always had an adequate labour supply.

Homosexuality began to be attacked and castigated with the establishment of these new family forms. It was seen as a criticism of the family, of going against the 'norm' of the heterosexual family unit which acted as a prop for capitalism.

The new measures are intended to force lesbians and gays back into the closets, and to make their sexual activities 'criminal' once again.

The moral crusade has to be taken on by the revolutionary groups and of course by those directly affected by it. Unfortunately, the organisation of demonstrations and activity against the new legal provisions is dominated by the gay professionals and entrepreneurs of 'pink capitalism'. As we have seen, the repression of homosexuality is directly related to the class nature of this society. Any 'reforms' in the short term will always stand the risk of being taken away again. The most effective way for lesbian and gay liberation, in fact the only way in which real liberation can come, is through the recognition that this class society must be destroyed. Lesbian and gay liberation has to be linked to the general onslaught on capitalism, and taken out of the ghetto and away from the domination of the leaders of the gay 'alternative society'.

BCCI, AND OTHER HYPOCRITES

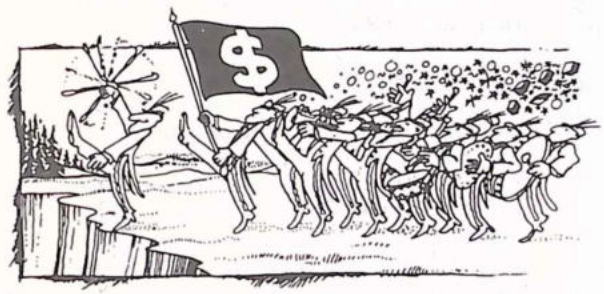
CAPITALISM IS LITTERED with the corpses of would-be gangs of supreme power-mongers. When an individual becomes so excessively wealthy and bloated with the obscenities of super-rich self-consumption, what else is there to do after all the executive toys have become tiresome? Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the 'government' of Abu Dhabi, is such an individual. Zayed's lapdogs created the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) by imposing appalling wages and conditions upon thousands of immigrant workers who had come to the Middle East hoping for a better life. This thoroughly capitalist organisation was then encouraged to dance to capitalism's natural rhythm of fraud, money laundering, narcotics, extortion and bribery... the list goes on and on.

BCCI caught many hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers from Panama to Afghanistan, one way or the other, in a web of intricacy and intrigue. Hundreds of thousands have lost their only savings. In England, 35 councils saw 65 million pounds creamed from working class people go down the drain. Those more directly involved, the 53,000 holders of BCCI sterling accounts, will be rescued to the tune of no more than 15,000 pounds each. Without much doubt though, the Tories will concoct a financial package which will bail out the scum who lost much more. An election is looming and plenty of grateful and well-oiled friends will be needed. Bribery, after all, is an international characteristic of capitalism and always close to hand.

Of course an estimated US $20 billion of money being transferred between one gang of capitalist vultures to another does not go unnoticed in the world economy or, indeed, occur overnight. Evidence is mounting that for at least three years the Bank of England knew about the shady dealings of BCCI. Furthermore, in 1990, proof of BCCI's hidden agenda was discovered.

Good Boy Goes Bad

It was the discovery by the Americans that BCCI covertly owned the First American Bank that first revealed that BCCI had access to the potentially 'embarrassing' financial information contained within the accounts of many top officials in the major political and military establishments of the Bush administration. This ultimately led to BCCI's downfall. Furthermore, to the depraved ears of those who could hear the obscene sounds of the frenzied BCCI coupling with First American, this was purely ecstatic music. With this marriage of convenience BCCI's vast experience of making dirty money appear Persil white, twinned with First American's respectable establishment veneer, Abu Dhabi — a.k.a. Sheikh Zayed — saw the opportunity to establish a rival power base to challenge American hegemony.



The progression in time from allowing the privileged few access to preferential 'sweetheart' loans, to having tens of congressmen and generals dining on the graft from BCCI's pocket would not have been long. Whilst BCCI just got on with the 'normal' business of capitalist activity, (i.e. those listed above), it was ignored. BCCI methods were brutal and lacked finesse, but even so, did not present Western governments with too many difficulties or much of a threat. A blind eye was conveniently turned. Capitalism's assassins and henchmen, for the time being, were allowed to run amok, but would they turn upon the very ones who encouraged their existence? Yes, with the potential for dozens of America's high ranking officials to be in the pocket of the BCCI, all either blackmailed, corrupted or even just simply bought. Abu Dhabi had clearly signalled its higher intentions. The alarm bells between governments rang. It was decided that the rival power base, which BCCI represented, would have to be eliminated.

It is utter rubbish to suggest that Robin Leigh-Pemberton, governor of the Bank of England, did suddenly on the morning of the 5th of July, 1991 decide, all by himself, to save the world from BCCI. To suggest that this lackey may have had some independence and blown the whistle on BCCI before receiving, via the Tory machine, American instructions to do so, is the same as suggesting that, against all natural evidence, a jellyfish can grow a backbone. Leigh-Pemberton has been bought and paid for and must dance the dance of the corrupted. A total yes-man, he has, as a reward for his craveness, received this year from his Tory cohorts a £22,000 pay rise and an added bonus of £80,000 'compensation' for not growing grain on his 2,000 acre farm. The USA, as always finding England more than willing to do its international dirty work, nominated Leigh-Pemberton to be the bag-man for BCCI. It comes as little surprise, then, that at the investigational phase of Noreiga's indictment before the US courts, the records of the bank he liked to do massive business with are frozen and open to inspection. Could this be coincidence or convenience?

This sordid tale is one not dissimilar, at least in tactics, to that of the trojan horse. BCCI was a pretender to the throne, a 'third world' interloper. The battle between two sets of gangsters for ultimate power has been one by the present incumbent exploiters.

The Biggest Financial Fraud?

The biggest financial fraud is that fraud which considers it has the right to the economic control of millions of working class women and men — just because the exploiters own the means of production. The biggest social fraud is capitalism itself. Whilst the working class round the world is attacked, beaten and murdered every second of the day, capitalism plans redistribution of $20,000 billion — back into its own pockets!

The biggest political fraud is government. Within one form always lies the future of another and a guarantee that there will be no improvement for the working class. Neither the Majors of today nor the Noreigas of tomorrow are our friends.

As yesterday's and today's history drag humanity ever closer to the edge of the capitalist abyss, the choice before the world's working class becomes increasingly clear: Anarchist Communism or barbarism. There is no third way. Not until we reject all government, will real communism, anarchist communism, become a reality.

THOROUGHLY ROTTEN MILLIE

BEHIND THE FACADE of the *Militant* newspaper and its network of sellers, lies that most obscure and yet influential Trotskyist organisation, the Revolutionary Socialist League. Ever since this sect emerged inside the Labour Party under the influence of Ted Grant, it has kept its existence secret except to the initiated, which it recruits through the Labour Party branches, the Labour Party Young Socialists and the paper-selling network. For many years it remained a tiny grouping. Thanks to very hard and consistent work, and the departure of rival Trotskyist groups from the Labour Party, leaving it free to build its organisation without competition, it began to grow in the mid 70s. By 1980 it had just under 2000 members. In the heyday of Militant in 1986, thanks to the high profile of Derek Hatton and Tony Mulhearn it was able to boast of a membership of 8,000.

Liverpool

In Liverpool, Militant built up a powerbase and was able to count two Labour MPs amongst its membership, Dave Nellist in Coventry and Terry Fields in Liverpool. On Merseyside, Militant concentrated in taking over the district Labour Parties. When Derek Hatton was elected in 1979 there were only four Militant members as Labour councillors. Militant was able to increase this number considerably, and to gain control of the local party structure. In doing so they inherited and emulated the old system of patronage of Bessie and Jack Braddock, the right-wing Labourites who ran Liverpool as their fief, and developed support through 'jobs for the boys', in much the same manner as the U.S. Democratic Party in local government. Militant took on the old practices lock, stock and barrel. As Hatton admitted in his book, *Inside Left*, "People have accused me of handing out jobs to the boys. Of course we did. We wanted people around us who understood the plan, who were committed to it". Hatton was a high-flying careerist and wanted the post of council leader. The leadership of Militant refused to let him stand against John Hamilton, the group leader. They had become past masters at manipulation of structures, and reasoned that they controlled the council practically, and did not need the bad publicity of forcing Hamilton out. This illustrates their attitude to the Labour Party. Finally Hatton fell out with the leadership because he wanted to oppose the threatened disbandment of the District Labour Party by the Kinnock leadership in the winter of 1985-6. The Militant leadership of Grant, Peter Taaffe, and locally, Tony Mulhearn, argued against this, saying that such opposition to disbandment "would allow the right wing to separate some of the best left fighters from the Labour Party nationally". As it was, both Hatton and Mulhearn were expelled from Labour, and now 'our Degsie', denied his moment of glory, has gone on to male modelling and setting himself up as an entrepreneur, trading on his knowledge of council practice.

Grant and Taaffe at loggerheads

Militant's decision to run a candidate from the Broad Left as Real Labour in the Walton by-election shows the poverty of their analysis of, and strategy towards, the Labour Party. Even when forced to stand outside the official Labour structure they still choose to use the camouflage of Real Labour. In doing so they continue to perpetuate illusions in the Labour Party. Before the election they argued that even if they did not win, they would be happy if Leslie Mahmood received a substantial amount of votes. They were disappointed even in this.

Though they put themselves forward as a revolutionary grouping, all their actions only further the idea that Labour is somehow 'left-wing', 'socialist' or 'progressive'. They only strengthen the hoax of social-democracy. In their own book, *Liverpool — A City that Dared to Fight*, Taaffe and Mulhearn argued that their "achievements" in Liverpool Council "deepened support for Labour" leading to a "stunning victory" for Labour in the May 1986 local elections. In fact when Militant took over in May 1983, Labour had 47 per cent of the vote, dropping to 42 per cent in 1986. Even in terms of supporting Labour, they were a failure.

Any Labour Equals Real Fraud

Constant pressure from the Labour leadership has finally forced them to organise outside the Labour Party structure. But even here, their strategy is flawed. They will stand under the banner of Real Labour, continuing to hide the existence of the Revolutionary Socialist League, and continuing to further the myth that Labour is in any way a friend of the working class.

They have been a parasite inside the Labour Party for many years, and find it difficult to behave in a different way. Even at Walton there were severe problems. Terry Fields, one of their two MPs did not actually openly support Leslie Mahmood during the election, in line with being seen as a loyal Labour member. Now Militant is in total disarray, as Ted Grant, staunch partisan of remaining inside the Labour Party, finds himself in a minority on the central committee of Militant, and faces expulsion.

He is the second important Trotskyist leader to be spurned by his own creation, the first one being the corrupt, rapist, toad Gerry Healy.

Illusions

The majority appear to support a sort of Dr Dolittle PushMePullYou strategy of running for election under the banner of Real Labour in certain areas whilst continuing to work inside the Labour Party in other areas. Whatever they do, they still support the election of a Labour Government committed to 'socialism' which will nationalise the top companies. They are a brake on the development of a revolutionary movement in this country, with their peddling of illusions that somehow Labour can be won to socialism, that somehow nationalisation can be equated with any real change for the working class, that using the parliamentary process via electoralism can achieve revolutionary change. Hopefully their days are numbered. They are a parasite who may find it difficult to exist outside of the host body of Labour and may collapse. We look forward to that day.

CHILDREN: People or Property?

CHILDREN ARE THE only people who can be physically assaulted within the current legal set-up. Parents have the right to 'smack' their offspring and until fairly recently, teachers could dish out 'corporal punishment'. This alone should alert us to the fact that children are seen as something as less than fully human. Our society is actually awash with prejudice and discrimination against children. Hotels and restaurants may declare without irony that children and pets are not welcome.

In many ways our attitude towards children is similar to that of animals. On the one hand we sentimentalise over them yet on the other often humiliate, control and exploit them. True, in Britain at least, few children are engaged in full-time work and this must be preferable to the days when they were employed in coal mines and factories. But in giving them the now fashionable 'protected' status we enslave them. Like all protectorates the world of children is one of being controlled.

Derision

The language we use with reference to children indicate values which are synonymous with derision. Adults may be ridiculed as being 'childish' or 'infantile' and no-one respects the older child or adolescent who is a 'cry-baby'. Children have also been labelled as ego-centric, immature, lacking reason and logic and even of being anarchic(!!). Following from these characterisations adults often impose their will on children. They have to do things 'because we say so'.

One writer and childcare advisor, Judy Miller, has made a study of children of nursery age, and has found them to be quite capable and responsible. She found for example that four year olds could be compassionate and caring, skilful and safe in the use of woodworking tools and capable of logical thought. The problem often, is not with the children but of adults' perception of them as inadequate. This gives rise to negative stereotyping which in turn leads children to be treated unjustly. Judy Miller has coined the term 'adultism' to use when discussing these stereotypical views. Adultism is the assumption that adults are superior to children in every important respect.

On examination it is clear that adult behaviour is often far from perfect. How many adults can honestly deny that they have acted irrationally, stupidly, drunkenly or dishonestly in terms of human relationships? And isn't it adults in the guise of generals, politicians and capitalists who are fucking up the world and its populations?

Fictions

John Holt in his book *Escape from Childhood* has argued for giving children rights to protect them from arbitrary adult control. Whilst anarchist-communists would certainly question the whole idea of 'rights' as being liberal fictions, the realisation that children are fully human is an important one. His fundamentally reformist demands include; the right to equal treatment with adults under the law; the right to vote; to have financial independence and responsibility; to seek and choose guardians other than their parents. Most adults would reject these demands as silly or unrealisable. Despite the liberal character of the demands, they do point to the gross inequalities which are normally left unquestioned. To vote in elections is a waste of time for everyone, but why should children not be active in political struggle? For children to choose their own guardians may seem ridiculous but how many children are abused, neglected or fucked up by their natural or appointed ones? Children can't be trusted to handle their financial matters, it may be argued, but how many adults are in debt or have crippling overdrafts? As for equality before the law, it is a fiction in the adult world. Nevertheless, children often resent and reject the patronising and authoritarian law when it is applied to them.

Kropotkin

Many anarchists have been aware for decades of the potential of children and of the repressive and distorted environment in which they are brought up. Nevertheless a more conservative strand emanating from Kropotkin has survived as well. He argued that children 'naturally' depend on their parents who 'naturally' raise and control them within families. As children gain in years, Kropotkin argued, they will become increasingly independent until, at adolescence, 'children' openly challenge parental authority and ultimately break free.

Now while we cannot deny that babies and young children need safe, caring and supportive environments, there is little doubt that young children can survive independently of adult supervision. In the third world millions do so. Freedom from adults need not wait until adolescence; it should be available to children who demand it. When children are ready to take control of their own lives, we as anarchists should recognise and encourage them. We should take our propaganda into the schools. The bourgeoisie and the state will see this as corruption of youth and cry out abuse. However, comrades, the revolution is for children too. In South Africa it is interesting to note that it has been school children who have often been the most militant and uncompromising in the opposition to apartheid. They have an equal role in the revolution here!

This article has only touched on a few of the issues which relate to children. Other contributions are welcome.

NB. For Judy Miller's discussion on adultism etc. see the magazine *Childright*, March 1991.

A NEW WORLD

Anarchist Communism or Barbarism

This article is to form the first in a series concerning the trends in modern capitalism.

Introduction

It may seem that we have faced, over this past two years, the most momentous events that we are likely to face for the next ten. But I do not believe that to be so. The two major events — the Gulf War and the break up of the Soviet bloc — have only been steps along the way. Far more is at hand than actually meets the average eye. The phrase — The New World Order — is seen by Bush as a new Pax Americana, a new promised peace, security and wealth to be guaranteed by his military. What is on offer on the surface is the appearance of peace and prosperity, beneath is a reality of war of a different kind, not the old Cold War which was very much out in the open, but an economic war fought out of sight, but more importantly of course, the continuation of the class war on new ground.

THE BASIS OF THIS present and changing world order dates from the Second World War. Prior to the war the USA was entering another period of crisis similar to the depression of some years previous. The beginning of the war in Europe was the big chance for American capital to make its move. In the first two years the USA was given the opportunity to use its failing industrial capacity, by lend/lease etc., supplying all manner of goods to those engaged in war. Only in 1941 did the USA enter the war thus having two clear years of profit and preparation. The years up until the end of the war allowed a number of policies to be set up for the post-war period.

Stripped

The colonial powers were to be stripped of their exclusive markets and areas of investment. Thus the process of decolonisation was begun and a new era of neo-colonialism set in place. The old financial and trade order was to be reorganised by means of such things as the Bretton Woods agreement. The old gold standard was to be dropped and the dollar standard adopted for world currencies and trade. Thus one aspect of American financial hegemony was put in place. The creation of new world institutions were to complete the picture, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was to supposedly remove the problems in world trade which had led to war, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) was to give a framework for the reconstruction of those economies destroyed during the war. At the same time the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was to give credit and loans to help even the balance of differing economies. These institutions were dominated by the USA and could not avoid being used by those with the power within them to gain all manner of advantages. The institutions were to become like all other capitalist institutions as the means of exploiters to exploit, dividing the world, the 'Free World' and the rest.

Pax Americana

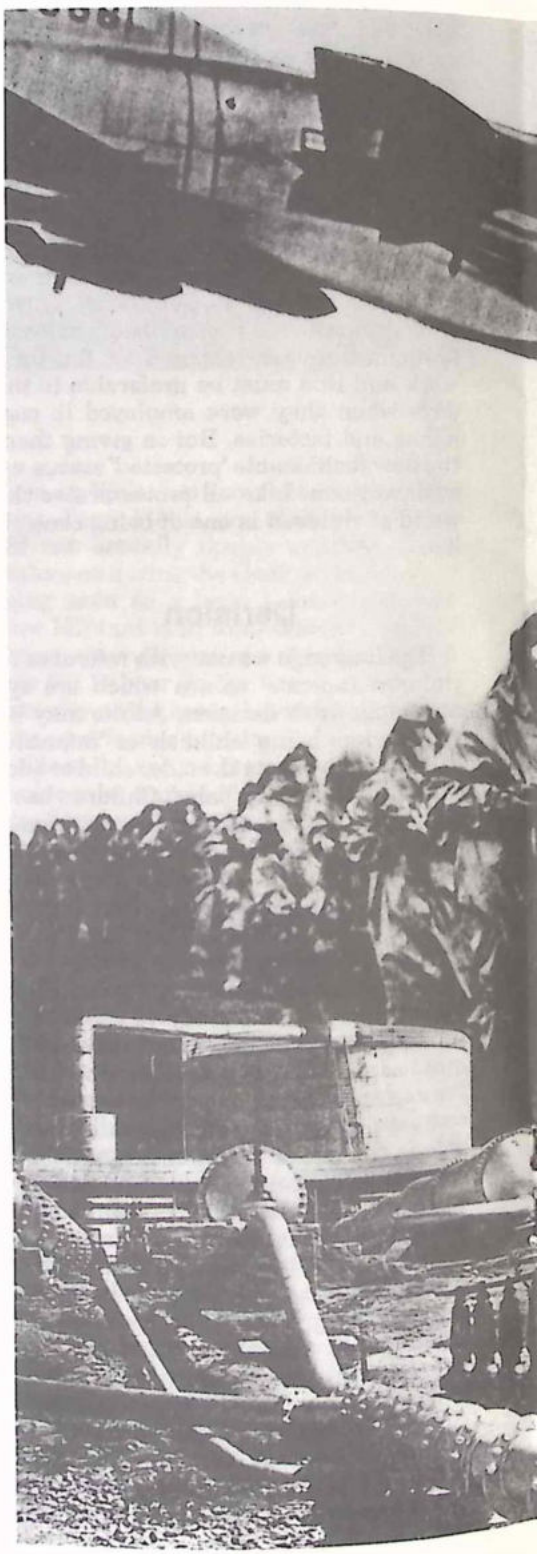
The Pax Americana was the concrete form of the Free World ideology, the USA being the policeman of the world, protector of those allied to it against its old ally, the Soviet Bloc, which had its own ideology and its own power interests at stake. This Free World ideology meant an American economy further perverted by its reliance upon military production to take up its spare capacity, the result being a military/industrial network throughout the USA. The further results of this, and the military/political paranoia that went with it were a series of wars fought away from the two super-powers but between their representatives. The most important of which was the Vietnam war, in actual fact involving Laos and Cambodia as well. Here the American ideology was in full swing, no neutrals allowed, there being only those for us and those against us.

By virtue of the Bretton Woods order the USA effectively had the rest of the world pay for the war by the use of the $ standard, the US government could print as many $ as it wished, borrow where it wanted, pay back when and if it wanted. Unfortunately it came to be that the US economy had only one major saleable commodity, arms, the rest of its industry having been neglected and starved. Of course, the US economy had other things to provide the world but it increasingly came to be that others were to take over where the USA had achieved so much in the immediate post-war era.

New

The new situation was this:

The world had been divided into two huge armed camps, a bi-polar world, with



DISORDER

the USA leading one bloc, the Free World, an idea around which a whole ideology had been built up, stridently anti-communist, even to the point of seeing anyone not actively pro-american as communist or pro-communist, calling it 'the evil empire'.

A series of financial and trading institutions had been built up to order and organise the world market, itself in a sense denied the opposing bloc, and further dividing the world into two further opposing camps, the exploiting and the exploited.

This situation was to be further complicated by the emergence from the exploited nations of a new set of industrialised nations taking away from the old masters all manner of profitable industries.

Prior to this the old enemies of the war, Germany and Japan, had become major players in the world economy by virtue of the ways in which the victors had arranged the new rules. They did not have to spend in the same manner as the rest upon defence, they could concentrate upon making their capital super-competitive, but they remained essentially under the tutelage of the USA because of the division of the world politically.

From there being a whole range of political and economic players on the world scene pre-war, there was now essentially only two but there was a whole new vocabulary to the game:

Super-power, where the capacity for world destruction was in the hands of a very few.

Third world, poverty had been exposed, concentrated, intensified, institutionalised, continually recreated, poverty was becoming an absolute, there were the incredibly rich and the utterly poor.

The non-aligned, a category essentially denied by the Free World ideologists, there being communists, pro-communists and proto-communists.

THE END OF THE OLD WORLD ORDER

THIS INTERNATIONAL arrangement could not last for ever because it was based upon very shaky foundations. The focal point for the western bloc was a nation whose economy had been turned over to the continuous guardianship of an essentially paranoid idea. In addition the new forms of economics were to be based upon Keynesian lines: stopping underconsumption and overaccumulation.

That is, using credit and welfare payments to soak up as much of the production as possible which went unconsumed. This was to try to remove the basic cause of the crises of the past, hence IMF credit etc. The problem of some nations having a flood of profits, accumulating more than the world economy could stand was to be solved by using those excesses to finance the others via the IMF.

This was never to work because the strong economies had no interest in seeing their profits go to others, hence the US would not run the IMF on strict Keynesian lines but used it to its own advantage. Eventually it could only break down as it did. All of the old Bretton Woods agreements were to be abandoned as the US saw fit.

Command

The Eastern bloc of the USSR was run on command lines, a command economy and a command politics. Unfortunately for the inheritors of Stalin's mantle such a politics and economy has only so much capacity. The command economy could go only so far and then run out of steam, especially considering that it was beginning the race from miles behind. Command politics can only retain so much compliance, can exercise so much hegemony, and then without either a successful economy to bribe the working class or extremely intensive oppression cracks must appear.

From the very beginning Russia transformed into the USSR was going to be at a disadvantage. It was the weakest area of capital at the time of the First World War. It then had to endure the disruptions of conversion into a non-market capitalist economy and then destruction of the Second World War. It did not have the same technological pool as the West. Also it had the problems of its very size

Continued on page 14

Hackneyed Hacks

The following article was submitted by an anonymous reader. While we don't normally publish unsigned articles from non-members, we felt that at a time when state communism is in collapse and the Communist Party of Great Britain is hurriedly changing its name to Democratic Left it would be useful for purposes of debate as well as being valuable information.

I AM INTERESTED in revolutionary organisation. It's my belief that libertarian organisation forms the hub of the movement towards revolution. But to attract the calibre of revolutionary who has that fierce strength of inner resolve and determination required, we should be attempting to forge a movement that is so far removed from the preconceptions of 'ordinary' — read bourgeois — organisation that it is then seen and known to stand for a qualitatively different type of society. Anyway, as part of that I think it's important for libertarian communists to every now and again restate our organisational strengths. Hence, the article.

Authoritarian Communism

Authoritarian communism is a method of social organisation created by and made specifically for the social benefit of bureaucracies. It is a specialised but ideal vehicle for a body of ideology which seeks to justify the imposition of the world view of a cabal of intellectual and middle class totalitarians upon the working class. Its dogmatic and reactionary perceptions contribute nothing to the cause of working class freedom, but only have on offer a greater and harsher degree of exploitation. It has nothing at all in common with libertarian communism. A society of free and equal individuals acting without the constraints of the capitalist economy — whether that be state capitalist or socialist or otherwise — is what strikes real fear into the hearts of authoritarian communists. They would have no leverage and no way to make social privilege and to create hierarchy for themselves.

Contained below is an extract from a book published in 1952 entitled, *The Communist Technique in Britain*, written by Bob Darke, ex-'cadre leader' of the then Hackney branch of the British Communist Party.

"... The Hackney Borough Secretariat met once a week at this or that comrade's house. Thus did it save money and thus did it tie each comrade's private life more closely to the Party wheel. I have known Party members to sit in their own living room without protest while other members of the Secretariat ridiculed and censured their choice of furniture, curtains, books, newspapers, even toys for their children. The wife of the comrade in whose home the meeting took place may have taken part if she was a party member. If not, her place was in the kitchen making tea..."

The Party Line

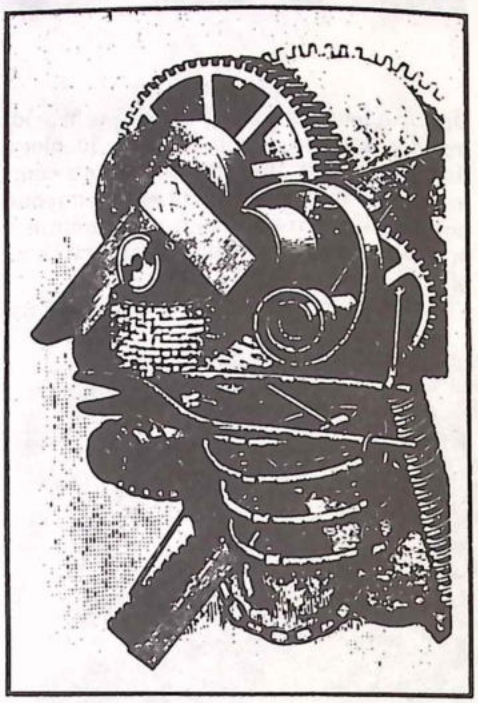
"...First of all, the representatives of each grouping reported on their activities. A docker, for example, may have given a thorough outline of the situation at the docks. A housewife may report on the success or otherwise (and it had best not be otherwise) of the Peace Petition canvassed in her block of flats. Through all of these reports ran one consistent thread — the Party Line. If that was Peace, for example, each group representative had to show how the group had been exploiting it. When all reports had been made the Borough secretary rewarded them with praise or criticism. He was listened to with respect, for none there believed they were just listening to Comrade John Betteridge. They were listening to a man who had received his instructions from higher up. The Borough Secretariat was a lever to be lifted or depressed by the London District Committee, according to the Party Line, which was itself evolved by the National Executive of the Party..."

Hate-America

"...When Betteridge placed before us London district's commands that agitation and propaganda against the Americans must be intensified, no one questioned the wisdom of it. You would be surprised by the ease by which we could persuade the Hackney docker or the Hackney housewife to hate America. Tell an East Ender whose home has been three times bombed that the Americans want to launch a third world war, and how would you expect him to feel? Tell a Hackney housewife that the Americans are compelling the British government to spend money on arms that should be spent on food, and how would you expect her to feel? The hate- America campaign was one of the easiest waged in Hackney. When it began to work the communist had only to suggest that Russia could send Britain food were it allowed to do so, that Russia was disarming while America armed. Sometimes, though, there were embarrassing moments. This was invariably when the Party Line hiccuped..."

Titoism

"...The topsy-turvey business of Tito went unexplained for days. The whole world was discussing Tito. We were keeping our mouths shut. Had anyone else in the party thrown down a challenge to Stalin we should have attacked him immediately. But Tito was different. He was



a communist hero. The shock of his break with the Russians stunned the Party, and not a few of us privately believed that it was the beginning of a great schism. But neither I nor anyone else was allowed time for such heresies to develop.

Only when every Party branch was formulating plans for 'fighting Titoism' did the District Committee start explaining the Cominform's case. I remember one speaker who came down from headquarters to talk to us about Titoism. He was calm, self- assured, like a school teacher patiently lecturing a dull class. Our Party's leaders had known all the time of Tito's possible defection. But what could you expect from a man who had been an American agent during the war?

There it was, flung at us casually like that. Tito was an American agent. During those wartime moments when we had all but made a saint of Tito he had been taking money from the Americans. He had betrayed us, let us down. We hated him. From then on we were all in step with Uncle Joe again. And the portraits of Tito were taken down from the walls and quietly burned. Harry Pollitt had once talked proudly of the signed photograph of Marshall Tito which hung on his wall. I wonder what he did with it."

The operation and structure of the Communist Party in Hackney in the late 1940s was not unique. It was the same as any other C.P. branch anywhere in the world. The only differences that existed were those of effectiveness. Tens of thousands of working class women and men were persuaded to join the various Communist Parties. What should have become a time for optimism, a new beginning after the defeats caused by Fascism, became instead just another false hope,

another ideological rout by capitalism. Why?

Not all the blame can be put upon the Communist Parties; other factors must be taken into consideration. But, mainly through the policy of an unquestioning obedience to Moscow, did the C.P.s come to bear a very major responsibility. by choosing to defend the USSR the C.P.s defended the thoroughly bourgeois concept that some national states, whether they be state socialist or otherwise, are worth the spilling of working class blood. After two world wars in relatively quick succession the last thing the working class needed was a third one. To the detriment of fighting on the terrain of what were the real concerns of the population, the C.P.s became just another factor in the whole social spectrum of the powerful manipulating the powerless. But in this particular case, those responsible were more odious and reprehensible than most.

Enemies

To the class conscious observer of capitalism, the capitalist is one part of the economic equation, the other of course is the worker. The capitalist does what is required to keep his economic system surviving. As such he is our natural enemy. But there are other enemies, ones who deal in the realm of hopes and desires and dreams. They are not as open about their motivations as the capitalist is, but the end result is the same. Exploitation. Just as the parliamentarian politicians cynically manipulate the immediate hopes of their electorate, in the same way as the desires of working class men and women for a life of potential fulfilment are exploited through all manner of charlatans offering cheap and nasty palliatives, so also are the dreams of a new society taken up and manipulated to the ends of exploitation. True, the authoritarian communists do want to put an end to the capitalist system, but only so as to implement the system of state socialism, the system of economic decree, of bureaucratic command and yes, of course, more exploitation.

The western working classes of the '40s and '50s showed considerable common sense and political acumen in not permitting the lies and duplicities of Communism Inc. to sway them in favour of setting up copy-cat regimes of the USSR.

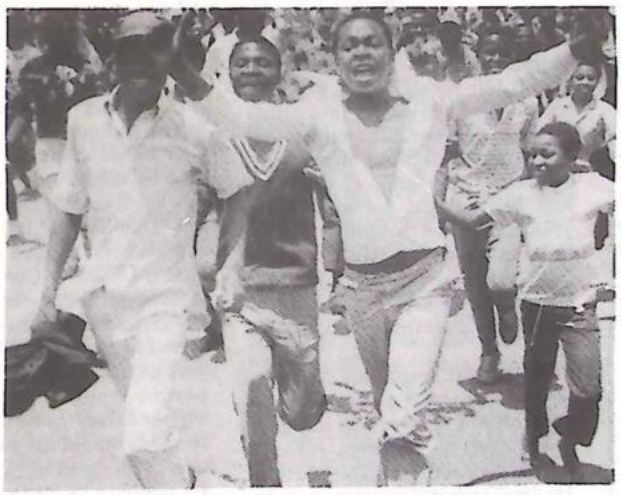
Should the working class in this country and in others decide once more to dream that dream of a society without exploitation, and to strive to make it a reality, it becomes incumbent upon libertarian communists to do all in our power to treat one another as equal participants and to fight against conceptions and forms of organisation which allow the working class to be treated as pawns to be manipulated to the dictates of any form of capitalism whatsoever.

The Politics of Tribalism

IN THE LAST issue of *Organise!* (No 23) we had an in-depth article on the African National Congress, showing that the politics of nationalism and Stalinism had nothing to offer the South African working class. However, this did not mean that we thought that the other organisations supposedly representing the South African masses are any better. The Pan African Congress is in many ways an ANC Mark II, distancing itself from that organisation by its own brand of nationalism and attempting to snatch its 'radical' mantle. The pamphlet mentioned in the previous article refers to "grim stories of what happened in PAC camps..." The PAC structure is just as hierarchical and authoritarian as that of the ANC.

Nationalists

In the 1980s the ruling Nationalist Party, faced with mounting social unrest, started to form an alliance with the emerging black capitalist class. This black bourgeoisie grew out of the industrial development of the Bantustans, the black reservations created by the regime. The mouth-piece of these small capitalists is Chief Buthelezi at the head of Inkatha with its strongholds amongst the Zulus of Natal. He advocated 'non-violent change' in the '70s and '80s and has strong links with Henry Oppenheimer, President of the multi-national giant Anglo-American. Oppenheimer himself is a leading light amongst pragmatic South African capitalists with strong ties to capitalism internationally.



Tension

The carnage in the townships is a direct result of the politics of tension developed by the Afrikaaner regime. President de Klerk agreed that his secret police should fund Inkatha and its trade union wing UWUSA with vast sums of money. An initial payment of £55,000 was revealed, and it appears much more has gone to Inkatha over the years. Inkatha impis have been used to attack ANC neighbourhoods, often with direct police and military connivance, and sometimes with the support of armed government undercover units. In addition, there have been reports of a number of direct attacks on the ANC by police and troops wearing balaclavas. The special services unit Five Recce, according to one of its ex-members, Felix Ndimene, have been involved in massacres on trains that further aggravated relations between supporters of ANC and Inkatha.

Factions

In some areas, whole townships with populations of at least 30,000 have fled before the warring factions. The ruling regime is pursuing an effective strategy to immobilise its opponents. It attempts to coopt the ANC whilst weakening it through building up an alternative 'opposition' amongst the black masses and encouraging the divisions of tribalism. It hopes that in the post-apartheid elections it can go into alliance with Inkatha.

One sign that Inkatha has an important role in helping the white boss class maintain its privileges is the phenomenon of many wealthy whites joining Inkatha. In some well-heeled areas, the white rich are setting up their own Inkatha branches.

Stalinists

As we said in *Organise! 23*, the ANC has been trapped and immobilised. Wedded as it is to a section of the new black capitalist class and espousing a 'stages' theory borrowed from the Stalinists which claims that bourgeois democracy must be won before anything else can be attempted, the ANC can offer no solution for the vast majority of the population. Indeed, the ANC is guilty of tribalism itself, filling the leadership with Xhosas.

There are many sincere militants in the townships and workplaces, members of one or another of the rival organisations (ANC, PAC, or AZAPO) who want the overthrow of the system of privilege and do not want to see their organisation become the new boss. The working class has to organise independently and for its own interests. It cannot rely on the ANC. This is especially true if the white regime drops Inkatha and Buthelezi due to their loss of credibility and pursues its alternative strategy of coming to terms with the ANC in order jointly to rule South Africa.

"The fact is that the free enterprise system remains the only system in which wealth can be generated in such a way as to provide the jobs and infrastructure necessary for growth and stability... the destruction of Western standards and capitalist bases is the last thing whites should fear in South Africa."

Buthelezi, from his book *South Africa: My Vision of the Future*

ACF DAY SCHOOL

March 14th 1992

Topics will include:

Nationalism

Leninism

Anarchist-Communism

Watch this space for details

OPEN EYE
We recently received the first issue of *Open Eye,* " a new independent magazine of uncensored news and progressive ideas".

It includes articles on: The History of the Falklands War; Gulf War Launches New World Order; The Economic League: The Blacklisters; 'Gladio' and the European Secret Armies; And More...

Available in alternative bookshops and other outlets at £1.20 or send a SAE (27p) and £1 payable to *OPEN EYE*, c/o Acorn Bookshop, Box 42, 17 Chatham Street, Reading, Berks. RG1 7JF

TERRORIZING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA
This book brilliantly describes how American power and capital fit into the New World Disorder. It's the best introduction available to Chomsky's work — short, to the point and free of endless footnotes and sidetracks. The recent history of American foreign policy and the real agenda of Reagan and Bush are clearly stated, along with the significance of the break-up of the Soviet Empire and shifts of national capitals. Chomsky is so good on these matters (and subject to a blanket ban by American mainstream publishers) because most of his sources are official American government documents, and for his trenchant criticism of so-called liberal intellectuals. The only drawback is that Chomsky (and his academic supporters) have a basically liberal view of how 'common sense' and rational philosophy are crucial parts of libertarian socialism — whereas we surely know that common sense can be dangerously misguided, given the influence of modern bourgeois culture and the media. This aside, the book is a little pricey, but is extremely well produced. Overall — absolutely essential reading.

Get from AK Books, 3 Balmoral Place, Stirling, Scotland, for £3.95 + postage.

PIC 12

AGAINST REDISTRIBUTING POVERTY
A pamphlet on the State's plans for child maintenance by the Wages for Housework Campaign and Payday men's network.

Editors' Introduction
We received this review from an Organise! reader and have included it in this issue to encourage discussion of a very important issue. We will review the pamphlet ourselves in the next issue and would also welcome contributions from readers.

Hackles should instinctively start to rise as soon as the State, particularly under the Tories, begins to murmur about wanting to help us out. But publicity, particularly adverse publicity, about the Child Support Bill currently slinking through Parliament, has been minimal.

The public face of this legislation has been that it is designed to alleviate the poverty of children by tracing absent fathers and forcing them to pay maintenance. Most people's gut reaction to this is that it's all fair enough. But, predictably, behind the smiley face comes the grim and devious trooper that is the reality of State social intervention. This pamphlet is a close look behind that mask. The two groups involved carefully examine the State's real motivations and base their resistance on a perspective far removed from the liberal collaboration of the Poverty Industry.

The most important thing to realise is that the money collected from absent fathers will not go to the women or children. All of it will be deducted from the mother's Income Support (and the proposed Child Support Agency will essentially only be interested in mothers on I.S.). The only beneficiary will be the Treasury.

The only proposal in the Bill which has proved newsworthy has been the threat to cut single mothers' I.S. by 20% if they refuse to name the father. Indeed DSS interviewers have already been threatening women in this way, illegally. To go by previous tactics, while the State would be only too glad to implement such a policy it may also be willing to sacrifice it as a 'compromise', creating the illusion that the legislation is then acceptable. The only dissent raised by an otherwise supportive scab Poverty Industry has centred on this aspect of the Bill, and in fact it has now been defeated in the Lords. It is therefore all the more important not to confine our attentions to this proposal alone. It is also dangerously simplistic to think that the Bill is only an attempt to save Benefit money.

Its major purpose is an attack on women's economic independence from men, which Income Support provides. The family has always been recognised by the State as an important instrument of Social Control and there has been vocal political alarm at its increasing self-destruction and abandonment in the UK as everywhere else.

"The financial independence of Income Support has helped women to break away from the traditional division of labour in the family: women as the dependent carers, men as breadwinning tyrants. By breaking away, women have made space for and strengthened the efforts of every member of the family — young people, men and other women — to reconsider what kind of relationships we want to be part of".
ARP, p4

By forcing women back into economic dependency on men it is forcing them back into the family, in contact with and under the economic influence of ex-partners. These men may well feel that they thus have continued 'rights' to a relationship — increasing the risks of rape, violence and general abuse. "The State upholds men's power over women in order to uphold it's power over everyone."

The only alternative to enforced contact with and dependency on an ex-partner will be to take up waged work on top of the unwaged work of caring for children. This 'option' is heartily and explicity encouraged in the White Paper, *Children Come First* (October, '90) that preceded the Bill:

"If maintenance were to be received in addition to Income Support payments then the custodial parent would have to earn a higher salary to be as well off in work. It would act as a disincentive to going to work and further frustrate the ambitions which the parents have for themselves."
ARP, p12

This idea that single mothers are a) not working, b) desire above all else a job outside the home (in effect a second job), and c) that this is the best route out of poverty, is supported by the Poverty Industry, who consequently come in for some well deserved criticism here. The facts constantly belie this the worst paid work by increasing their poverty fulfils only the employers' ambitions of hiring workers for less.

This attack and the posing of the two 'options' of family hell or low waged work on top of unwaged work is the attack on Income Support as a wage for the work that all mothers do as carers.

It is of course an attack on the poorest men as it extorts a larger proportion of their income. It is also an attack on the Black community especially. Of Afro-Caribbean families in the UK 43% are one-parent/women-headed and 47% of Afro-Caribbean children are born outside marriage. Therefore Black families and social networks would be proportionately more vulnerable than White families, even though Black families are a minority of those attacked by the maintenance proposals.

It is an attack on us all, not only with the bureaucracies sweeping new powers of surveillance as the State intrudes its policing of our sexual and social relations, but in its reinforcing divisions between men and women, forcing us back into relations which long struggles have rejected.

This pamphlet is readable, well-researched and a vital explanation of the motivations behind State action. It is unique in its definition of Income Support and clear in its explanation of the importance of women's economic independence for us all.

"Let us be clear. We are against the maintenance proposals not because we are being asked for money on behalf of children, but because the money is not going to children, it is going almost entirely to the State... which deprives women and children in particular of cash and services they are entitled to, only to further tighten its grip over all our lives."
'Payday men's network', ARP, p35

"The principle underlying this publication is: single mothers' Income Support is a wage, not charity, for the unwaged work which government and industry could not function without and which they must pay for."
'Wages for Housework', ARP, p3

Against Redistributing Poverty is available for £1.20p (post paid) from Kings Cross Women's Centre, PO Box 287, London NW6 5QU. Cheques should be made out to Kings Cross Women's Centre.

FAST FORWARD *for* FREEDOM

a day conference on education
at Vaughan College, St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester
on Saturday 2nd November 1991
from 10 - 6 plus evening entertainment
for full information send a sae to: Lib ED, The Cottage, The Green, Leire, Leicester, LE17 5HL.

SOVIET UNION

Dear *Organise!*,

What a load of rubbish the so called 'coup' and 'revolution' in the Soviet Union turned out to be. The coup was almost certainly a faked and manipulated stunt right from the start. It was used as a cover for the power struggle between Gorbachev and Yeltsin and the real coup that was going on: the rise of Yeltsin to populist dictator! The whole thing has since been turned into a spectacular myth and fairy-tale story by the capitalist media, with all the happy democratic people cheering in the streets, marching off into the democratic sunset and living democratically ever after. Now that Yeltsin and the liberals have made themselves mega-popular and diverted everyone's attention they can get on with the job of selling everything off to the business sector while dumping millions of workers on the dole. Fortunately, in amongst all the nationalist and democrat flags carried by the crowds, we could spot a few black and red anarchist flags.

Meanwhile back in this part of the world life continues with the boredom and misery of recession. In my local town, Reading, the slimy Labour council have begun the process of sending a number of poll tax resisters to prison to try and frighten us all, but we're still not paying! Today the word 'Democracy' is nothing more than a codeword for capitalism and austerity. Anytime they want to attack us and impose some oppressive new measure on us they do it in the name of 'Democracy'. I think it is about time we had a revolt against Democracy. Democracy is just a load of crap!

Paul (Reading)

p.s. The only good news is: now the trots are really finished.

Dear *Organise!*,

The contradictions of capitalism, state capitalism and bureaucracy are all reaching a dynamic climax in the USSR and Eastern Europe. The problems are not created by the working classes of these countries but by the mismanagement of their bureaucracies. For instance, grain is produced but inadequately stored due to lack of facilities. Workers are alienated by the greed of production managers. Contradictions are also generated by ethnic exploitation as in Ulster. Defence systems were developed at the expense of industrial commodities due to the endless onslaught on the USSR by those interested in destroying the first attempted workers state. Workers' commitment to socialism is undermined by the irresponsible consumerism flaunted by the West. The breakdown of the Soviet system is therefore the direct result of capitalist, state-capitalist and bureaucratic brutality and mismanagement. Only socialism can solve these contradictions.

A.A. (Edinburgh)

REPLY TO A.A.

Anarchist-communists don't believe a 'workers' state' is possible. As the Russian example shows, revolution means the working class collectively seizing control of the workplaces, land and streets from the bosses and the state and creating organisations based on mass decision-making to run things e.g. workplace and neighbourhood assemblies, councils and committees. Similar defensive organisations such as workers' militias will be needed to defend these gains against Leninists and others who would set up a new state and hence boss class.

To us the Russian counter-revolution began in October 1917 when the Bolsheviks seized power in the name of the working class and began to take over collective organisations such as the Soviets and factory committees, implementing Bolshevik control and one- man management, thereby consolidating state power. Debate and opposition (both inside and outside the party) were eliminated through repression which involved the setting up of the Cheka (political police) on Lenin's advice in December 1917, imprisonment, shootings and the crushing of the anarchist Makhnovists in the Ukraine and the Kronstadt sailors' rebellion in 1921.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear *Organise!*,

From the Battle of the Boyne to the Hunger Strikers, in Northern Ireland there has been nothing but appalling bloodshed, death and torture inflicted on the Irish people.

The fight has been going on for 800 years and "has not ceased nor will not cease" until the Irish people are allowed self dignity and respect.

The Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, Macguire Seven, Bloody Sunday, the Hunger Strikes, the Gibraltar Killings and the numerous deaths of many volunteers and non-volunteers for the Irish Republican Army. These are the reasons why we can't, won't and aren't going to forget the past as one SDP councillor said we should. The list could go on forever. Nothing can be achieved in the way of peace until:

- The troops are out.
- The prevention of terrorism act is smashed.
- The border is removed.
- The RUC and UDR are disbanded.
- Prisoners are out of jail.

This is why we all have to pull together and stop what atrocities are going on now. The brutality of the UDR, RUC, UVF and British army etc. is horrific! There have been more violations of human rights in Northern Ireland than there are drops of water in the Irish sea!

Once there is peace in Northern Ireland, and only then, can we try to rebuild what we have lost.

S.L. aged 13 (Saffron Walden)

REPLY TO S.L.

We are opposed to the military occupation and repression carried out by the British state in Ireland. History shows us, however, that national liberation struggles make little difference to the working class majority. The foreign military withdraw and often the more obvious direct foreign colonial exploitation ceases, but the working class remain exploited by 'their' national bosses and repressed by 'their' army and police. In addition, the old colonial relationships persist through economic domination by foreign capital in the form of multinationals and international banks.

It follows from the above analysis that the Irish working class does not have the same interests as the Irish ruling class just because they're both Irish. A united capitalist Ireland is not worth fighting and dying for. As we said in *Organise!* 14, "Therefore we struggle for working class unity. However, we don't see this as a simple slogan to throw at the problem so as to renege on our revolutionary responsibilities to defend the Catholic working class against reactionary Loyalist workers. Protestant workers will only be broken from loyalty to the Orange bosses by the building of a revolutionary secular socialist movement which is opposed to the Green as it is to the Orange.

The essentially petit-bourgeois republican movement, tied to nationalism, cannot create this movement. It is the task of revolutionaries in Ireland to build this, North and South. This, like workers' unity, will be a hard struggle for our Irish comrades, but there is no alternative.

The task of libertarian revolutionaries in England is to oppose British Imperialism; its bloody repression in Ireland and its media propaganda war against the community of opposition in the North (not synonymous with the IRA/INLA). We must win support amongst British workers for the call for Troops Out and Working Class Unity".

BANGLADESH

Dear *Organise!*,

As the author of the article, now entitled 'The Long Arm of the State', I must draw the editors' attention to an error in transfer of the article — as we all know Martin Foran is not an anarchist nor has he ever been — the article should have read, "long supported by anarchists".

I must also make mention of the Back Page article about Bangladesh. First of all, there are protections against floods. Around two-thirds of the major river bank system has had extensive work done on it. These river systems are the channels which burst and cause severe inland flooding. They are now served by high banks and dikes. The problem with them though are numerous:

- they were designed and built by eternal 'expert' contractors, thus not employing local unemployed or underemployed labour;
- they cost millions of dollars which had to be borrowed, the so- called aid thus doubly depriving the country;
- the design was essentially a straight-line design not regularly following natural curves, as pointed out by both local peasants and radical engineers;
- the design even then did not incorporate any pumps to get rid of the flood waters collecting on the hopefully 'dry' side of the dikes;
- these pumps had to be bought, causing extra borrowing, and then incorporated causing extra cost;
- the local unemployed have since been used to modify the designs and install the pumps.

Secondly Himalayan deforestation is only a minor cause of inland flooding. The Himalayas are still a dynamic mountain range, ie they are still going upwards, which causes large landslides which are the major cause of flooding, something unaffected by the presence or not of trees.

The essential problem for Bangladesh is that large sections of its population are pushed out onto dangerously vulnerable land, both for housing and farming purposes, because of poverty.

Yours for libertarian communism,

J.C. (Sheffield)

REPLY FROM GREEN FLAME

We thank you warmly for showing us the courtesy of a review of our seminal work, *Paradise Referred Back — a radical look at the Green Party*. Many of your comments in the review are pertinent, others are a bit wide of the mark. In the pamphlet our comrades, O'Hara and Matthews, stress the utter importance of class struggle politics. Although the pamphlet is a libertarian-revolutionary critique from within the UK Green Party, nowhere in its pages will you find a recruiting drive for the Green Party. Hence, we find your reviewer's comments suggesting that anarchists should not join the Green Party a little strange. Green Flame has never advocated membership of the Green Party itself as the sole *modus operandi*. There are some good radicals in the Party, fighting a losing battle against the new

Continued overleaf

THE END OF THE OLD WORLD ORDER CONT.

and geography. It stretches over nearly half the world and large areas are incredibly cold. In spite of all this huge strides were made. To become a super-power in terms of modern weapons of mass destruction is a huge feat. Unfortunately it could only be made at very real cost.

Whereas the USA had industrial capacity which needed war manufacture to continue producing, it had a huge over-capacity, the USSR was the exact opposite. Competing in the super-power stakes, being a military super-power also perverted its economy. Having a huge relative under-capacity could only result firstly in an economy which was to remain stunted and under-developed.

Krushchev in his infamous 20th congress speech saw the need for the creation of an economy which included consumer commodities. This was to remain largely unfulfilled, partly by virtue of his own crazy ideas at the head of the command economy and by the geographical aspects of the Soviet economy. Stalin had begun the whole trend by making each republic specialist producers of particular things, production being concentrated in huge plants but often thousands of miles apart. In addition the best products of Soviet society were reserved for the military. The rest of the economy had to deal with second or third best. The wastage in production was incredible, physical inefficiency must have been at least 25%, something which no economy can endure long.

For example, the Soviet textile industry needed cotton so Stalin decreed that large areas of the Central Asian Republics be made over to the crop, whether it was a sensible use of land or not. The cotton was then to be sent to the Moscow area where most of the factories are concentrated. Thus, land which might have a better use is tailored to fit a political decision, using for instance large amounts of chemicals for often poor returns, the transport network is doubly loaded, transporting materials miles to factories which could be relocated and food is not produced which then has to be shipped in. Food production is chaotic, not having proper transport, such as refrigerated trucks, depots etc. allowing meat and other perishables to rot. Huge areas given over to one crop allow massive crop failures so the USSR has to buy on the world market. In industry the same failures are repeated and sometimes worse, the best materials, resources and personnel being given over to military production. The economy being confined by political command cannot develop. Needs are left unanswered, desires frustrated.

Problems

Many of these problems were recognised both by Krushchev and later leaders but politico-military considerations were to come first. What was described as a thaw under Krushchev became a new freeze under Brezhnev. Indeed the other great development of the Soviet economy was to achieve dizzying heights under Brezhnev, that being the Black market. Not only did it comprise the usual smuggled goods and illicit manufacture, it largely contained goods stolen from the production system either directly or with the connivance of the bureaucracy. The privileged profited twice. After Brezhnev's death his son-in-law was arrested and convicted of a huge number of corruption charges.

With the rise of Gorbachev a new era was to begin. The command economy had reached breaking point, the forces of repression could not keep in check the forces of a population which had to have change. The big problem for Gorbachev was always going to be how much change and of what sort? He attempted a Bonapartist balancing of forces, keeping a firm hand upon a concentration of power while making surface political reforms which would help to revitalise an ailing economy which itself would be partially reformed. Thus, Glasnost was initially only to allow a certain freedom of expression, politically and culturally, leaving the major areas of power in place. Perestroika was to give some land back to the rural workforce, give a greater freedom to industrial management but not the financial capacity, cooperatives were to be allowed to add to the service and small production sector. None of these cosmetic measures could ever be enough.

Turmoil Nationalism became rampant, often accelerated by local communist bosses to play one ethnic group against another and forestall any deeper examination of other and more revolutionary political possibilities. Out of this turmoil came the various initial declarations of independence, from the Baltic states, the rise of new political forces, the democracy movement and populist leader Boris Yeltsin, the forces of long repressed religion, Russian fascism in groups such as Pamyat, and nationalism which pitted different ethnic groups against each other, murderously so in some areas, such as the Armenian/Azeri fighting in the Caucasus.

Eastern Europe disintegrated as a bloc being led by Hungary, closely followed by a Poland brought down by successive failed pro-Moscow regimes, the victors being the Catholic nationalist Thatcherites of Lech Walesa. The German Democratic Republic was to be swallowed up by its big brother in the West. Bulgaria and Romania have only made half 'revolutions'. For a long time the eastern bloc had been well integrated into the world economy. The USSR had had to buy huge quantities of grain on the world market. Now the corpse of its European empire was being picked over by the wolves of the IMF and Western finance, Poland and Hungary had huge debts to finance. They have now been largely sold off cheaply to Western investors.

This rush of investment had been the sort of thing that Gorbachev had hoped to encourage for the USSR. His quotes from the Lenin of the NEP (New Economic Policy, a partial return to capitalist economics following the failures of war communism) era and his statements of good faith were not enough to bring in aid. For the west the death of communism had already been announced with the withdrawal of the USSR from the world stage and the oncoming collapse of eastern Europe, now the body had to lie down and die so that they could pick over the bones. The Free World had been vindicated in its victory, the archangels capitalism and democracy could come centre stage, complete with 'mom, apple pie and sunday school'. The USSR was now bankrupt, its industries were not functioning, production had contracted by around 10%, help to turn military production to civilian purposes had been requested. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was created — specifically to deal with the East. It proposes to aid the process of democratisation and its protection, to improve the environment and aid the economies of the east by — leasing machinery, recreating banking structures, accounting, legal systems, offering investment. All of this was to be done on a budget of around $10-20b. Projected costs for the reconstruction of the east come to around $2000b. Working together with the IMF and the World Bank there can only be one set of results — the Latin Americanisation of Eastern Europe, which will become a total captive of the west. Hungary and Poland are already essentially in that position.

In the next issue of *Organise!* we continue our look at the New World Order.

LETTERS CONT.

elite professionals, formed around the Green 2000 faction, but Green Flame places itself both within and outside the Green Party. We believe that a radical, socialist and libertarian movement will be composed of class struggle organisations, direct action ecologists, and an amalgamation of the new social movements.

We are also keen to emphasise the importance of anarchist and libertarian philosophy and politics in our overall strategy. Thus, Murray Bookchin, Kropotkin, and Bakunin, to name but three, have figured in our group of influences. We are a loose, informal but organised grouping active now in many European centres and, following the success of *Paradise Referred Back*, we are now happy to announce the publication of our Statement of Principles, written by myself and Dave Scott, available at 60p (including p&p) from Green Flame, BM 4769, London WC1N 3XX, United Kingdom. Those of your readers who were interested in *PRB*, following your recent review, 'Grey Turning Green', can receive copies of the pamphlet at £1.50 from the same address.

Heidi Svenson, For G. Flame Collective

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Join us!

The Labour Party has now lurched so far to the right that even the parasitical Trotskyite groups who have been trying to turn it into a genuine socialist party (something it never could be) are thinking of leaving. The Stalinist parties are in their death throes with the collapse of State 'Communism' in Eastern Europe. Leninist and Trotskyite groups (especially Militant) are split over whether to continue as tapeworm tendencies inside the Labour Party or set up alternative (sic) parties. They're all busy bleating that what collapsed in Eastern Europe was Stalinism, supposedly a different system to that set up by their heroes, Lenin and Trotsky. The British Green Party, following the example of their German counterparts Die Grunen, are rapidly becoming another traditional Grey Party.

Opportunity

This crisis in party politics and the accompanying major crisis in the economy present an opportunity for Anarchist-Communists. We have the only *credible* alternative to the twin horrors of the 'free' market and state-managed socialism, otherwise known as state-capitalism. It's also an opportunity for other groups, however: the Trots (Stalinism disguised) and the Fascists who are again becoming stronger.

Building

In order to build a movement we need to organise in class struggle anarchist groups both locally *and* nationally. This enables us to work more effectively, co-ordinating our activity and supporting each other so that we are a credible alternative to the vanguardist revolutionary groups who sabotage struggles for their own party-building ends. Such an organisation would begin to make its presence known trough effective propaganda and action whilst developing its theory in a lively, dynamic way in interaction with practice. This is the kind of organisation the **ACF** is trying to build.

The **ACF** works towards a social revolution, not to seize power itself, but participating in a revolutionary process as working class people, to assist the class as a whole to destroy the present system and build a free society run through mass decision making.

We urge all those who agree with our aims and principles to join our organisation, the better to take part in this coming about. Write to our national address for details. Apply for membership now. *We've been on the defensive for too long — let's build a mass movement that goes on the attack!*

SOLIDARITY

THE IDEA THAT the individual is of supreme importance is only a relatively recent development in historical terms. For most of human history, belonging to a group took precedence as people identified with the tribe, the clan, the family and locality.

Social solidarity was what counted and acts committed by individuals were perceived to be the responsibility of the wider social groupings to which they belonged. Blood feuds, for example, which involved warring extended families, often arose from the action of a single individual but carried collective responsibility.

Unlike modern capitalism, which tends to isolate individuals, pre-capitalist systems tended to incorporate them. People were bound together through a variety of strong social ties. This social solidarity was once the normal and universal form of relationship.

Natural

Insofar as individuals find it extremely difficult to live in total isolation, we may argue that social solidarity, to some degree, is natural. Human beings are social animals who necessarily must cooperate. Even within modern industrial societies, the urge to belong to some community or other seems overwhelming. So-called tribalism in respect of football supporters is an example of this.

In the fight against exploitation and oppression within the capitalist system, workers have always recognised the need for solidarity in order to win even basic demands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, striking workers have had to try to create and enforce the greatest degree of unity in order to beat their employers. The tension between individualism arising from the dynamic of capitalism and the need for united action has been one of the main preoccupations of workers in struggle. The issue of 'scab' labour has been so important that the success of workers' actions has often depended upon the ability to overcome imported strike-breakers.

Trade unions normally act as a barrier to wider solidarity since their main concern is with a particular craft, industry or occupation.

Sectionalism, meaning a divided workforce, has always been an essential feature of trade unionism in Britain.

Powerful

Solidarity on a mass scale can be tremendously powerful. During the General Strike of 1926 in Britain, sympathy and support for locked-out miners was so great that there was no strike breaking from within the working class. The one serious occasion in which the union bosses pushed for united struggle ended in disaster. The power and potential threat of millions of workers on strike frightened the government. It frightened the union leaders even more and they called off the strike when the issue of parliamentary sovereignty (sic) came onto the agenda.

The failure to achieve solidarity of purpose and action usually has dire consequences. During the 1984 miners strike internal dissension within the union's ranks and lack of significant support outside seriously weakened the struggle to preserve jobs.

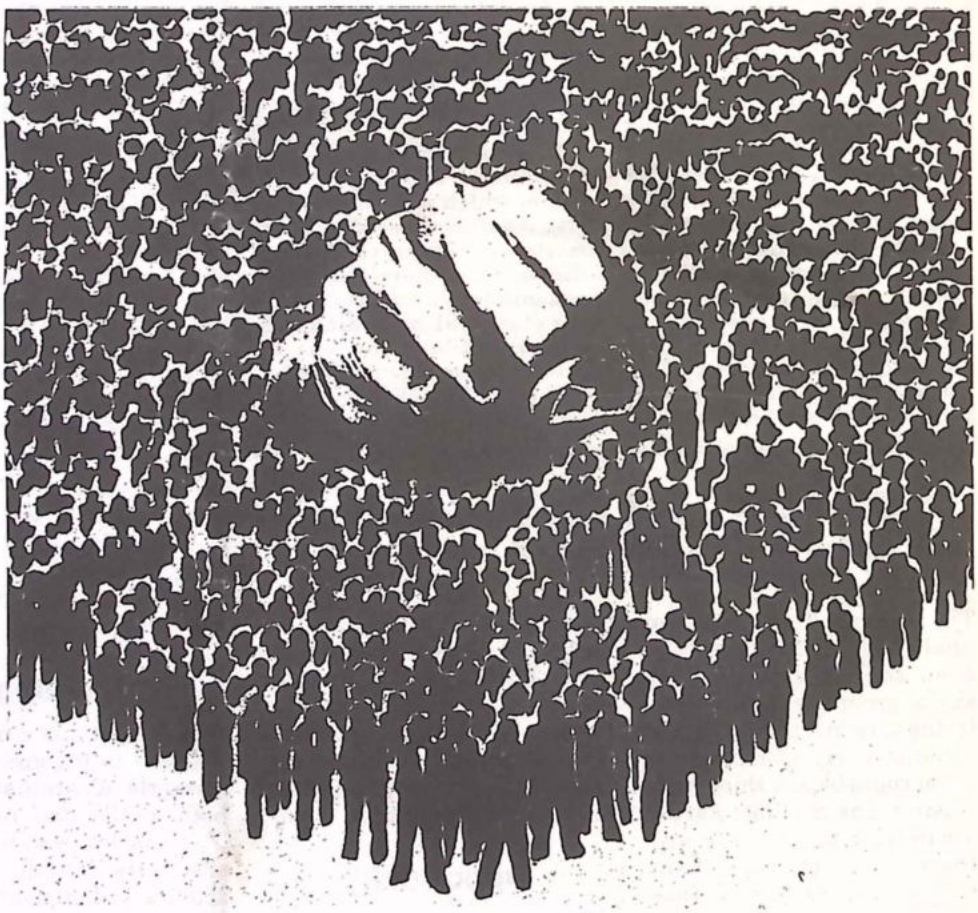
If solidarity is important for struggles which are of a defensive and limited nature within capitalism, then it is clear that in order to overthrow the system, the widest determined unity is going to be essential. Failure to involve the great mass of working class people and at least neutralise most others will lead either to quick defeat or civil war. The greater the cohesion of the struggle, the easier will be the task of creating post revolutionary anarchy.

Government

An anarchist society by definition requires the absence of government. Anarchists have, however, gone much further than this and fight for the abolition of all coercive institutions and relationships. How then, can order be maintained, for without order society would be intolerable. Part of the answer must lie in the creation of networks of manageable (in personal terms) social groups which have strong bonds within them and in their wider contacts.

Dynamic

Whilst the danger exists that social pressures will negate individual freedom, these must be counteracted by libertarian education and effective structural devices which promote the greatest possible degree of personal autonomy. Anarchist communists believe that social solidarity is simply the most 'natural' form of living in the world. Anarchy will not be an amalgam of unconnected, isolated individuals but a dynamic solidarity in which people interact on the basis of freedom and equality.



T/SOR/16/10

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

50p
July-Sept
1992
Issue 27

L.A. RIOTS

YUGO-BARBARISM

MALCOLM X

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

NEWS AND ANALYSIS

REVIEWS

LETTERS

ASPECTS OF ANARCHISM: FEDERALISM

AND MUCH MORE

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Due to summer break, we will be reappearing in October. Deadlines for next issue are 5th September for features and reviews, and 12th September for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

I am particularily interested in the Anarchist Communist Federations views on .....

.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Organise! Back Issues

Back issues of *Organise!* (from issue 14 to issue 25 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 40p & sae each and include:

- *Organise!* 20: Class struggle in Ireland; Romania; poll tax update.
- *Organise!* 21: Gulf war; Russia in crisis; Brixton.
- *Organise!* 22: Recession; poll tax; warfare state; Commune; Asia.
- *Organise!* 23: Iraq Interview; Greens; ANC; pits; police.
- *Organise!* 24: New World Order; Children; BCCI; Clause 25.
- *Organise!* 25: Columbus; SWP; Filipino Interview; Freedom.
- *Organise!* 26: Women & Revolution; Direct action; US Greens.

PRESS FUND

THE PRESS FUND exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of *Organise!* Money is always needed for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. We also want to see *Organise!* produced more frequently, with more pages and with a greater print run. Money is also needed to finance more pamphlets.

Contributions

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

- £100 London ACF boot sale
- £2 London
- £50 East London
- £2 Middlesbrough.

A grand tradition

IN 1925 NESTOR MAKHNO, Piotr Arshinov and other veteran Russian and Ukrainian anarchists in exile in Paris set up the excellent bi-monthly *Dielo Trouda*. Many incisive and analytical articles examining the Russian Revolution and developing anarchist-communist theory appeared in its pages.

In October 1936 the Italian anarchist, Camillo Berneri, in exile in Spain published the magazine *Guerra di Classe* (*Class War*) This paper printed some important and critical articles on the course that the Spanish Revolution was taking until the murder of Berneri in 1937 silenced it.

For fourteen years from 1956 to 1970 French anarchist communists around the magazine *Noir et Rouge* (*Red and Black*) developed theory in a multitude of articles and had an important influence on the events of May-June 1968 in France.

Today *Organise!* continues the tradition of criticism and analysis of all the major problems in developing both revolutionary theory and movement. We think that *Organise!* has an important role to play in the growth of a real revolutionary movement. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

But we need your support to help keep the furnace burning.

Sell *Organise!* Although our sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!* You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Feedback *Organise!* will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Who We Are ...

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:

Aylesbury
Chesterfield
Chester-le-Street
Coventry
Derry
Hexham
Grantham
Leeds
London
Manchester
Merthyr Tydfil
Middlesborough
Newcastle
Nottingham
Oxford
Portsmouth
Rugeley
Saffron Walden
Sheffield
Stoke

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally and has contact with like-minded anarchists overseas.

For all contact write to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

SUBSCRIBE:

What they said about *Organise!*

"Its vision of the "classless society" is rather different from that of Mr Major's."

Economic League.

"Puts a bit of class into the class struggle."

The Organise! Editors.

"Oh, Yes! Oh, Yes!"

John Major.

Name: .....

Address: .....

. .....

I enclose £3 for a four-issue sub, or £6 for a four issue supporting sub. Add 25% for overseas subs or institutions. Return form to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

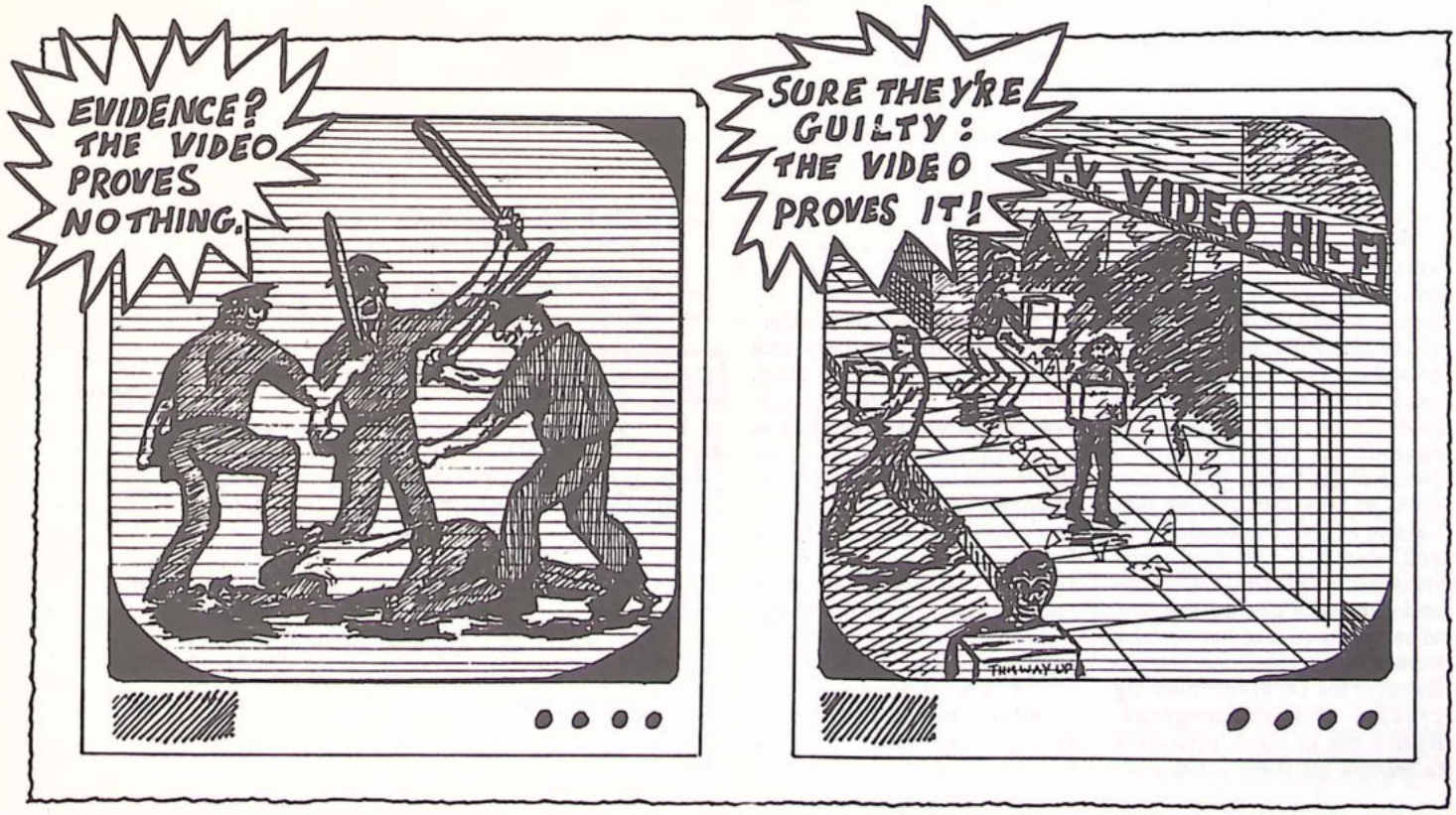
No Justice! No Peace!! Los Angeles Riots

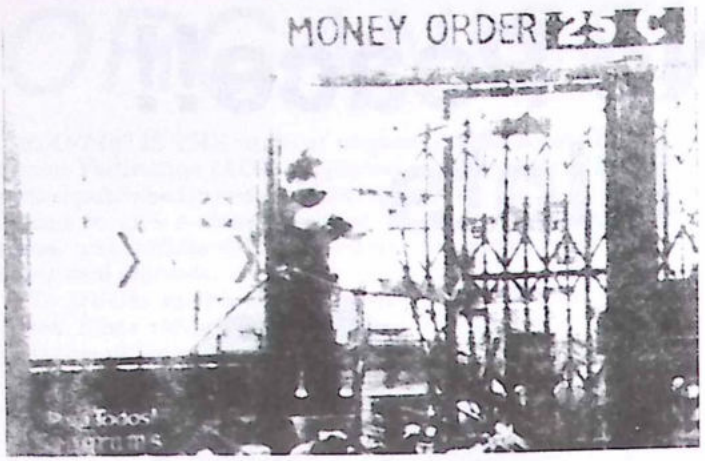
AFTER FOUR NIGHTS of "riot and looting" resulting in 58 deaths, 4,000 injuries, and 12,000 arrests, have the wrongs been righted? Sociologists and liberals will continue to burn the midnight oil dreaming up half-baked solutions aimed at opening the dead ends of hopelessness into the avenues of infinitely useless capitalist reforms. But little more than a few weeks later, this particular chapter of revolt has already receded from the exceedingly short memories of rich, well-protected and indifferent America — except that is, by LA taxpayer groups calling foul a 0.5% increase in local sales tax!

As well as being a gross injustice, the jury verdict in acquitting four police thugs of the Rodney King beating gave the stamp of approval to the official city policy of "restrained force". As represented on the video taken of the Rodney King beating, city policing in the USA is, more and more, simply a euphemism for state-inspired violence of unequal and cowardly application. It was this, along with the frustration born out of unremitting poverty which sparked the anger on the streets of LA.

Protected by massive security, Bush toured the area and promised $600m in federal aid. If that money is to be seen much of it will be creamed off into the pockets of entrepreneurial businessmen and corrupt city administrators, selling with all the razzmatazz but empty promise of a Wild West travelling medicine-man, a "new" range of band-aids and miracle cream. Within the managerial realms of social work and so forth the availability of funds for projects and ideological campaigns will be directly related to how close they are to the status-quo views of the purse-string holders. The "mopping-up" campaign by the Bush administration is well on course.

The end result of the invested $600m will be a state version of the revolt as unconnected to reality as the American dream is to the one in five US families living below the official poverty line. But even with all the propaganda machinery at its beck and call, the well-worn ruling-class tactic of presenting events such as LA as mere blimps, as unfortunate reactions against a perceived remoteness of the justice system, as one of the to-be-suffered checks and balances of a "widely accessible democracy", will be seen by many to be the big lie that it undoubtedly is. The more the US economy fails to live up to its expectations, the more reality





will impose its ugly head into the fantasies of the American leadership.

Racism

"We have a stealth type of racism that manifests itself institutionally within society. It's invisible racism. The same kind of racism that whites would vent on you in the south, kicking you in the rear end, or putting a dog on you or cracking your head open, they don't have to do that, they can use the police to do that. It's invisible, you can't see it. When you go in for a job opportunity and they tell you no, they don't even tell you why, but you know why. And this kind of incident with Rodney King just coalesced a broad range of issues that black Americans have been suffering with and putting an identifiable form to it in the form of a police uniform." (Don Jackson, civil rights activist.)

Racism is an undeniable fact. Its purpose today, in most of the industrialised west, is to establish as a supposed naturalism the superiority of white over black. Racism has always existed. The Crusades, of which Bush's new world army was but the latest instalment of cultural and economic imperialism via a technological superiority of armaments, are just one pre-capitalist example of how rulers are aware of the power of the race card. In this century we just have to look at the Nazis/Jews and also the racist characterisations of the Germans and Japanese during the war to see what sort of benefit the bosses gain from its usage. Even for the US electioneering process now in progress, Bush's use of black prisoners to bounce off their actions an image totally detrimental to all blacks is considered fair and normal.

Racism is not an attitude that, no matter how comfortable it would be for conspiracy theorists to think so, is a deliberately calculated policy of government. Government colludes with racism, because divide and rule is what makes the money machine churn. Because capitalist society is one based upon the competitive philosophy that produces winners and losers, the losers, isolated and without a cohesive political agenda, begin to view themselves as victims. They look for more victims to heap their problems upon, and so they contribute to the pecking order.

Purism

This analysis does not, though, in any way justify racism. Any manifestation of racism must be eradicated, for apart from the irrational injustice of such prejudice, nazi scum will take advantage of any lack of combativeness to push their own foul filth. It is also absolutely necessary for whites to support black struggles.

For no matter how reformist, even nationalistic and inversely racist many black leaderships in the struggle are, for white revolutionaries to retreat into a political purism would be disastrous for at least two reasons.

One, the visible factor of black and white acting together destabilises the racist images. Two, when the black-hate-white rhetoric is seen to be the dead end it is and an anti-capitalist agenda is adopted, revolutionaries should be at hand as friends, not as outsiders.

Class War, Not Race War

Impoverished workers, black and white, all over the industrialised world are beginning to question the economic situation they find themselves in. Although not yet articulate on a class basis, these workers are refusing to continue believing in many of the instilled cultural values so beloved by the ruling class. Respect for authority, fear of police, thankfulness and piety for a pitiful dole or a welfare cheque; the threads binding the ruling class's thinking processes to individual workers are beginning to slowly unravel and in some cases, snap with a vicious backlash.

The reality of life for an increasing amount of the poor has created a cynicism in spirit, an apathy in actuality. There have been years and years of broken promises made by corrupt politicians extracting taxes like gangsters demanding 'protection' money. The don't-cares are getting more, and the have-nots are slurred as losers and wasters by a ruling-lass controlled media. As the economic crisis refuses to slow down, so capitalist society becomes more competitive, more aggressive, more dog eat dog, less the 'dream', more the nightmare or the daily grind. The ruling class lies are becoming threadbare and worn and very transparent.

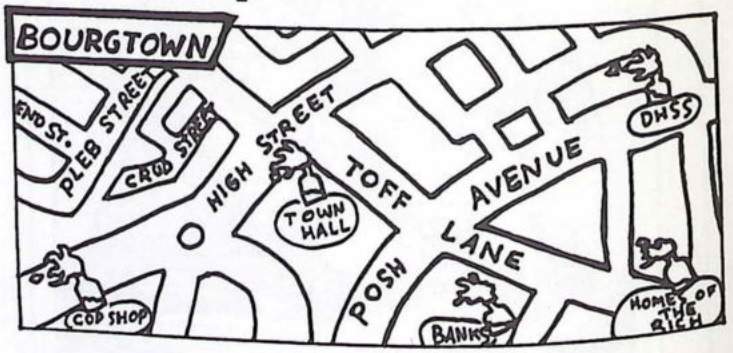
The cry, no justice! no peace! found its way into the consciousness of poor workers all around the globe. As well as referring to the LA verdict, how many also took this to be a summary upon their own miserable and soul-destroying daily existence?

Rebellious Times

It makes little difference if the businesses of our immediate exploiters be owned by white, black, Korean, or any other race. Class activists may well welcome the opportunity to trash and shop. But as we saw of LA the satisfaction of immediate needs and desires allowed the class enemy to organise repressive force. No matter how much food or things the individual "collects", if at the end the conditions which caused the rebellion still exist, are we happy with that? As anarchists, we must answer no. Our first priority is to encourage and develop the revolutionary potential in any rebellious mass. An assault upon the state outposts of capitalist power, whatever their form and however the capitalist media would present it, carries within it a positively forward-looking message that if taken up, copied, understood is of great value.

The practicalities of how to get from here to there need to be thought of. In the absence — for now — of the real thing, let your imagination run riot. And don't keep the results to yourself! To fan the fires of discontent is what *Organise!* exists for. Forward to the leadership of ideas!

Riots! Insurrection! Be Prepared!



- Good drawing isn't necessary, clarity of ideas is.
- Use explicit symbols, the less words, the better.
- Start stockpiling for appropriate distribution.

GERMANY

ONE OF THE main weapons in the ideological attacks led on revolutionary movements over the last 15 years is the statement that the working class is no more, is passed away, deceased, is ex-working class. A whole gaggle of fawning intellectuals has pushed this in many a weighty tome, on scores of documentaries and cosy late night chat shows. This has been a shared viewpoint from the Right to the sickening trendies of *Marxism Today*.

Strikes

However, history often has a pleasant knack of disproving the pet theories of these lapdogs of the boss class. A recent example has been the strikes in Germany.

And so the "end of history" has been shown to be a complete sham. The triumph of "liberal" capitalism and the establishment of a Thousand Years of the Market has not seemed so sure with the actions of the German working class, often held up as a shining example of a "good" and tame workforce.

Up to two million were involved in the strikes which swept through both the public and the private sectors. The trade union bureaucrats in the DGB (German equivalent of the British Trades Union Congress) and the IG Metall (steel workers) and OTV (public sector workers) were forced to call strikes faced with a smouldering anger throughout the German working class. The unions are thoroughly integrated into the Germany economy and are widely regarded as a necessary part of the social structure.

Control

These strikes were regimented and very much under the control of the unions. The hold of the unions and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) over workers is an historical fact. The German revolution in 1918 was sabotaged by the ideological hold that they had.

German workers were used to wage increases every year. The unification of West and East has flung this out of gear. The cost of unification was high, and the optimistic view that profits would increase with the exploitation of the eastern market has proved to be ill-founded. Any profits from investment in the East will not be reaped until at least 1996. The East has proved to be a great drain on the economy and inflation and interest rates have soared as a result.

To pay for the integration of the East the German working class is expected to pay by having their wages forced down. But many workers are not prepared to make sacrifices. As one skilled worker said, (*Independent* 30.4.92) "I have worked hard to reach this level and do not see why I should have to sacrifice it now". Sympathy for the public sector workers was high among the engineering and metal workers and they joined their protests. Already 60,000 jobs have been lost in the last year in engineering and metal and 20,000 jobs are threatened at Mercedes Benz.

Bathtime

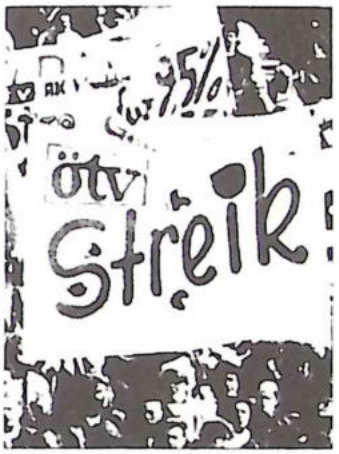
The public sector workers have been particularly badly hit by inflation and steep rises in rents and energy costs. One dustcart driver was quoted as saying, "Nowadays I can only afford to shop in the cheapest stores; I only take baths at home once a fortnight instead of once a week".

The public sector action closed down refuse collection, transport and the docks, postal services, and kindergartens. Lightning strikes by metal and engineering workers brought out 130,000.

The bosses have been under the illusion that they would have it easy with the building of a pan-European market. Now, however, things don't look so rosy. The prospect of a Germany, regarded as the foundation of the European Community, plagued by working class unrest, has been reinforced by the continuing instability in Eastern Europe.

Aware

For now, the unions have managed to secure a wage increase, much below that originally demanded. The OTV got a 5.7% wage increase after initially demanding 9.5%. Social stability has been restored, but the German working class is still deeply dissatisfied. It has been made aware of its strength and initial unity between public and private sectors has been built on. In Hamburg 10,000 striking refuse collectors and steel workers marched together. So far, the strikes were limited to the West. In the East however, a number of occupations against redundancies have taken place in the shipyards, steelworks and building sites.



Unity has to be established between workers in the East and West of Germany. The high level of militancy needs to be translated into action and organisation outside the control of the unions. These strikes have been the biggest actions of German workers since 1933. They have terrified the capitalists throughout Europe. Let us hope that these fears are kid's stuff compared to what could come.

QUICKIES

Guinness is good for you.
Or so they used to say before trading standards said it wasn't. Then again, "former employee" Ernest (tea-leaf) Saunders, sent down for theft & false accounting, then released due to "incurable" ill health and senile dementia, is now fit as a fiddle (oops). And, just to show there's no hard feelings, the firm has given him a £75,000 a year pension. This clearly proves that Guinness is indeed good for you. Can we assume this treatment is available to all Guinness employees? Can we get it on the NHS?

No Bad Apples!
Another lot off the hook is the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad. What a surprise! An avalanche of people released because of faked confessions etc. And then, just when we thought we had the WMSCS bang to rights (I don't think), we discover there is no evidence. How tight can you get? We demand our scapegoat! Surely one bad apple isn't too much to ask for. That's all that's needed to prove to us the police are doing a damn fine job, a service to the community etc. Now we'll never be able to rest easily, with faith in our police.

White Elephant
Ooer! Olympia and York, the firm behind the London docklands Canary Wharf monstrosity is filing for bankruptcy and the government refuses to lift a finger to save them. So much for London docklands, the boom town that has never been more than a ghost town really. Now it's just a white elephant since the crash of 1987 Yuppies are too "broke" to move in. While we can have a right good laugh at the Yuppies' misfortune, for the super rich people behind it all, it's just another failed venture. You won't see them pauperised by it or claiming income support. At the end of the day, they'll still be doing very well, thank you! But this sordid episode of ruling class adventurism has meant the uprooting and disruption of the lives of many working class Eastenders. Olympia and York promised a "jobs bonanza" in Tower Hamlets. Unemployment however, has gone up 25% in the past year.

Fist of Fury
One who didn't get away with it now! Management at French port authorities decided to "rationalise" the system and "modernise" established working practices in the industry (we all know what this means). None too happy about this, the dockers went on strike. In the town of Rouen, some "have-a-go" strikers attacked the head of the freight handling company's trade association. The broken nose and three broken ribs they gave him sets a fine example to us all.

Tanks for the Memory

THE FEBRUARY SPLIT in the Workers' Party in Ireland, when six of its seven TDs (MPs) left and formed the originally titled Democratic Left, has left the Stalinoid group feeling bitter and betrayed. (Shame!) At the Party's May Ard Fheis, (Conference) former Party boss and only surviving TD, Tomas Maggiolla, described the "split" as "a leadership-led coup against the Party and its membership". The new Party Chairwoman Ms Marian Donnelly, of Derry, however, claimed to bear no "ill will". Whether the rank and file will take such a conciliatory line seems rather unlikely!

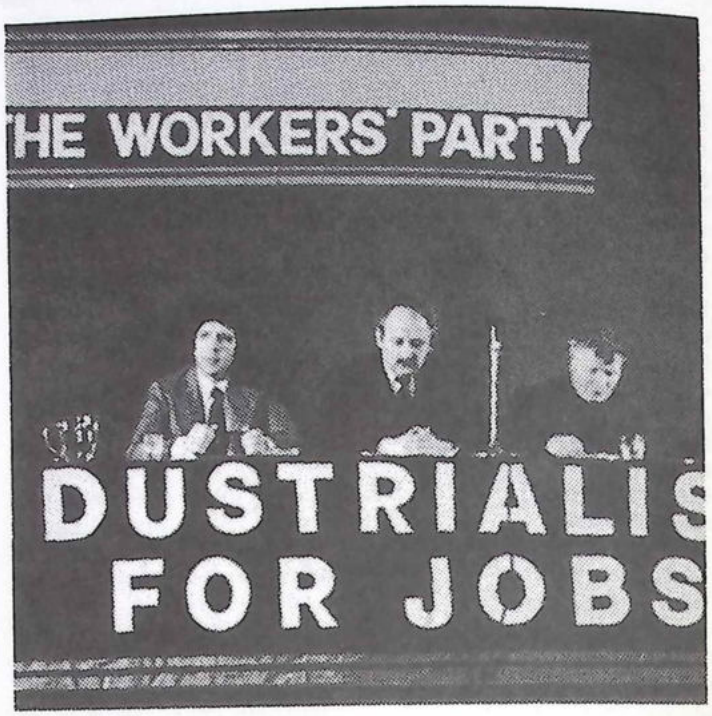
The Dublin Ard Fheis allowed the shrunken party the opportunity both to lick its wounds and to re-affirm its commitment to its vision, if it merits such a description, of "socialism". That "vision" is basically one of parliamentary reformism in the direction of the state capitalism as modelled by the recently collapsed Stalinist police states. For the time being however, the Workers' Party is calling upon the State and domestic capital to invest in Irish industrial development in order to make native Irish capitalists more competitive on the world market!

If this doesn't illustrate what Workers' Party "socialism" is all about then their perspectives on the Six Counties, where they have maintained much of their membership, should speak volumes even more loudly.

Delegate after delegate attacked the IRA, castigating it as "sectarian and bigoted". The assembled "Republican Socialists" (or is it "Socialist Republicans"?) did not however hear similar condemnation of the sectarian and bigoted State apparatus. Instead the anti-Unionist community was urged to co-operate with the security forces, Chairwoman Donnelly stating that "...nobody has the right to act outside the law"! Of course this should come as no surprise since we are, after all, talking about the Party which considers the non-sectarian, non-bigoted RUC to be the best police force in Europe!

Patently Leninism/Stalinism, which the Workers' Party is a somewhat grotesque example of, has entered a crisis from which it will not recover unscathed. However we would be wrong to think that it is dead and buried (that remains our task!) It is stupid to underestimate the destructive potential of these groups.

The Workers' Party can still draw working class people into its ranks with its talk of "secular socialism" and its apparent alternative to the ghetto of sectarian or establishment politics. The Leninist menace will not go away because the libertarian revolutionaries shout loudly that it is in the dustbin of history. It



is not. The politics of the Workers' Party and left republicanism, like those of the Labourite or Trotskyist Left in Britain must be challenged on all fronts by anarchist-communists. A revolutionary alternative to their dead-end, though sadly not yet dead, politics is what's needed.

Exciting news from the North!

We are pleased to report that the Irish Anarchist Bulletin *Organise!* has been relaunched after an absence of three years. The Spring '92 edition, produced by class struggle anarchists from across the Six Counties, contains lots of interesting stuff with articles on sectarianism, the uselessness of electoral politics, the abortion controversy and the disturbing fascist mobilisation in the north.

Comrades in the Six Counties are highly optimistic about the potentiality of a significant growth of libertarian communist politics in the area and are slowly but surely building the nucleus of a movement.

The next issue of *Organise!* — British version — will have a full, detailed report on the resurgence of class struggle anarchism in Ireland. In the meantime get hold of a copy of *Organise!* — Irish version — for 10p and SAE from: — *Organise!*, Black Cat Press, P.O. BOX 5, Derry, Ireland BT48.

Poster

Bundles of this poster can be got from London address. Please send donation. Or get single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced a small concertina leaflet explaining basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, donation for a bundle to above address. And, not satisfied with this, we've produced 8 different stickers (Anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, homelessness, women, etc) black lettering on red. Again, bundles can be obtained from London address, if you enclose donation.

New! Reprint due to popular demand!

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation

Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a "vanguard" party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p including post from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

PROMISING THE MOON

COLIN WARD, anarchist writer and journalist, explained in an article in *The Independent* why he would not use his vote on polling day. The article showed what anarchists and others know to be true already: that all parties (and I include those which advocate an independent Wales, Zoroastrian calculus, bottom spanking, a united Ireland, enzyme-free washing powders, hanging, and spraying dog-turds green) are the same. Those of us who have been raised to associate the vote — almost instinctively — with the exercise of personal power find it difficult to overcome the notion that the right sort of party with the right sort of policy can, if elected, contribute to our betterment.

Once overcome, however, the truism, "Whoever you vote for, the government always gets in", becomes more than a catchy slogan since to be against government is to be against elections.

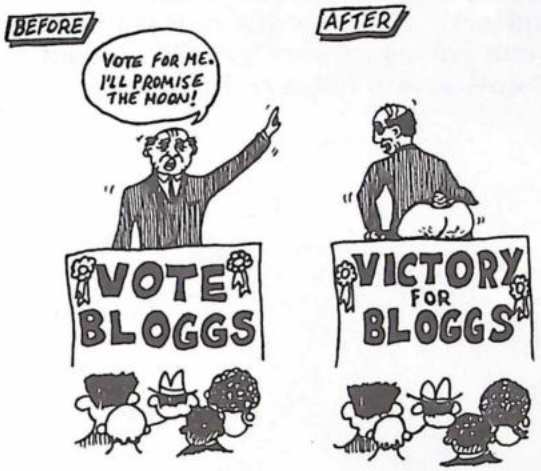
But the existence of the recent occurrence of the five-yearly farce has presented more than just an ideological hurdle; it sets out to destroy what anarchists hold to be an essential component of a better society. The right to vote dupes the "democrat" into believing that she or he is changing something and that this is the only way voices will be heard in the political arena. If the government or MP of "choice" has not been elected, then the punter must direct personal struggle into party work, bar-room debate and buying the correct newspaper.

Distortion

The electoral system shapes and distorts our perceptions and involvement in many ways. Apart from the expensive razzmatazz, an election, like the government which must inevitably result, is divorced from the community with its particular problems and the individual elector and his or her wider aspirations. So great must the diversion factor be that the punter must not at any point between elections think of acting independently. Not only must the individual never shape those forces which affect her or his own life and the lives of those close, but lending voice to wider debate must not be encouraged. All expression must be processed so that it eventually comes out of the mouth of a government spokesperson (or is re-routed into political dead-ends by middle-class liberalism). It is essential that this processing be maintained. It is the mark of twentieth century existence that we consume nothing that has not been processed. Our ability to relate directly to anything in its basic state — like a child unable to relate its milk-shake to a cow, or a fish-finger to the sea — has become seriously and effectively impaired.

Trap

It is self-evident that there cannot be as many parties as there are issues. For this reason, the focus on some issues (PR, tax, NHS) diverts the punter from others that are not shunted to the forefront of media debate. Gaetano Piluso writing on education in *The Raven 16* remarks: "It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that it is possible to overcome oppression on one level while not changing the very structure of society. In its hierarchical form, society allows for and, in fact, calls for the domination of the powerless by the powerful. By compartmentalising the different forms of oppression, a new hierarchy is formed which inevitably acts to safeguard the structure of society by focusing attention on "social problems" rather than on society itself." ('Nurturing the Radical Spirit').



Other issues are tackled identically by all main parties. Those looking to a change of government to answer a problem — teachers fiercely opposed to testing, for example — are thereby disenfranchised. Other issues are not raised in the manifestoes — medical care in prisons, safety in merchant shipping, nutritional content of school meals — and the voter can only hope that a change of regime will bring about a change of attitude.

Management

But the greatest value that the electoral system brings to capitalism is the way that it allows viewpoints to be categorised and managed. There is tactical voting where voting is encouraged for a party which has no real following and poll-based predictions where voting is encouraged for parties whose supporters fear that victory is not certain. Voting patterns are managed using the pressures of locality, gender and racial origin as well as those of class, status and, of course, wealth. But more significantly, protest about the system is rendered impotent, since criticism of the system is merely interpreted by one party as condemnation of the other. Within the either/or presentation of false choice, to find fault with the NHS means wanting to privatise it. To criticise Labour equals Tory support. In the battle against schools "opting out", we're fighting for the supremacy of plainly deficient LEAs in the running of education.

But the sickening strength of ruling-class propaganda is such that even some of those who did not vote and would not vote find it hard to dissociate themselves from the proceedings. The underlying assumption that a vote for Labour, whilst meaning more of the same as far as working class welfare is concerned (high defence bills, prescription charges, immigration laws, troops into Ireland etc, etc) would have at least pointed to a measure of dissatisfaction with the system, some desire for something different, a belief that what is wrong ought not to continue, still endures to weave its persistent ideological spell. But all this viewpoint does is give concessions to the belief that Labour's supposed traditional voters do believe that Labour represents a more humane management of capitalism, when, in fact, evidence of this is very elusive, except that is within the rabid daydreams of most of the Trotskyist sects. If there is an underlying cynicism to be detected amongst the class it is that which we, as libertarian revolutionaries, must build upon. There is no room for offering may-maybes and half way accommodations with capitalism. Those that are already the forgotten ones, the alienated in this society, need steadfast and solid friends.

The option of choice between all pro-capitalist parties is a false one if the goal is a lasting and irreversible change for a better world. We must encourage the refusal to exercise those "democratic rights" which only lend a legitimacy to the rotten system. Refusing to vote, in countrywide and local council elections, refusing to pay the poll tax or that which follows, refusing to give information or help in any form whatsoever to the panoply of blood-sucking bureaucrats and middle-class liberals making our lives a misery — all these actions are important practical steps. Build the culture of refusal and resistance!

YUGOBARBARISM

YUGOSLAVIA HAS BEEN pulled into a horrific civil war, where the different factions of the emerging bourgeoisie (Croat, Serb, Slovene etc) have whipped up nationalist hysteria to draw the different populations behind them. The crisis in the Yugoslav region illustrates the degree of decomposition of the organisation of world capitalism: civil war and barbarism as a consequence of the New World "Order". This latest war is at the very borders of Western Europe. A Europe of "Civil Liberties" and "The Rights of Man" celebrated the fall of "Communism" with the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall. Now it builds another wall to protect itself from the waves of immigrants caused by the economic and political collapse of Eastern Europe.

The frontiers of Croatia since 1945

Croatian territory desired by Serb nationalists

As with the Gulf War, disagreements have appeared among the partners of the Western bloc. The Yugoslav crisis has aggravated the conflict of interests between the European and US states and between the European states themselves. The United States, continuing in its role as world policeman, declared that it would not tolerate the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The newly emergent ruling class of Serbia, determined to forcibly maintain Yugoslavia under their own domination, could not undertake its military offensive and defeat of the Croats without the implicit assent of the United States. At the same time, the US blocks the interests of Germany, its most dangerous rival in Europe. The German ruling class and state, through their geographic and historic situation, intends to re-establish its spheres of influence both to its east and to its south. The disarray of the ex-satellites of the USSR, as well as Russia, allow it to build these spheres of influence more quickly and strongly.

This disturbs its European partners and the plans and interests of the United States. The German state from the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis was quick to demand the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. It wanted a Franco-German "peace-keeping" force, to increase its influence, and insure the independence of Croatia. It was the German state that first suggested sanctions against Serbia, through the EEC. These suggestions were at first blocked by the long term allies of the United States, Great Britain and Holland.

Slides

The longer the different fractions of the ruling class squabble over their own interests, the more Yugoslavia slides into the barbarism of civil war.

The incapacity of the European states to solve the Yugoslav crisis after 3 summits at the Hague, six peace conferences and more than a dozen cease-fires, shows the conflict of interests of the European boss classes in applying a common strategy. These contradictions highlight the chronic weakness of the EEC and its attempts to create a bloc independent of American capitalism. The last conference at Maastricht tried to sort out "the differences that still exist" and to give the EEC a "political personality". It attempted to develop a common strategy for the European bloc which can insure the defence of its interests, (even if these interests are not always the same) and strengthen European capitalism.

Even if the Yugoslav crisis is "solved", we can be sure that other outbreaks whipped up by nationalist rabble-rousers will demand a direct intervention of the "Great Powers". If there is one thing the European and American boss classes can agree upon, it is that no "independence struggle" will escape their control. If that is true for today, it may well collapse under the weight of conflicting interests of the different "allies". This has happened already to some extent: Italy, Germany, and Austria jumped the gun in recognising Slovenia and Croatia, against the wishes of the rest of the European "Community".

The Vultures Gather

Slovenia was seen as a juicy morsel because it was richer than the other republics and could provide a healthy supply of cut- price skilled workers for the EEC. In recognising Slovenia, Austria was making a gamble. It wished to increase its influence in the area, and had to put aside its worries that the Slovenes in the Klagenfurt enclave of Austria would be manipulated into demanding unity with their fellows over the border. Similarly, Italy wishes to increase its influence in the area, using Trieste as a focus, but has to remember that the Italian-Slovene border could be put in question by the new Slovenian state. Already the fascists of the MSI, as well as the "patriots" of the Italian Socialist Party are expressing their fears about this.

Egged on by the manipulations of the Western powers, some of the East European states are making their claims. Hungary has stated that the predominantly Hungarian region of Vojvodina— in Serbia — never agreed to the Yugoslav union and was forcibly incorporated. Romania, for its part, has its eye on the Romanian-language villages of the Serbian Banat. Bulgaria has never accepted the establishment of the Macedonian republic, and wants to incorporate part of it into its own nation-state. Greece, for its part has claims on Macedonia, as well as wishing to stop any Macedonian claims on Greek Macedonia! The Greek tourist board has put a number of ads about Greek Macedonia in British papers. This was not to promote British tourism there, but to as-

sert its right to the area, and to show how Greek it was. The Greek state has closer links with the Serbians than any of the other EEC countries, arguing against the sanctions and allying with the Serbs to stop any pretensions of the new Macedonian nation-state.

Turkey, too, wants to assert its influence in the area. As well as building up its links with the Turkic states of the ex-USSR in Central Asia, it hopes to penetrate the Balkans by supposedly "defending" the ethnic Turks and Moslems in Bulgaria, and the Bosnian Moslems. The Albanian nation-state for its part has its eyes on Macedonia, the Kossovo region, and northern Greece.

The Balkans are indeed a danger for the "New World Order". Not only could the civil war there drag in other powers, but it could aggravate the tensions between the US and the European powers, as well as the newly-emergent powers like Turkey. That is why it is seen as having to be contained. The "Great Powers" couldn't care less about the bloodshed there, they are worried about their own interests.

Slobo

The Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic started his career in the Communist Party structure in Yugoslavia, the League of Communists. Through his defense of the Serbs in Kosovo province, and his aggressively nationalist stance, he was able to come to power in Serbia. He dreams of replacing Tito as the great leader, whilst accusing the latter of betraying and humiliating Serbia "aided by the conspiracy of the Vatican and the Comintern"! The first stage of his bid for power was to desert the sinking ship of Yugoslav federalism, to purge the League and to set in motion an "anti-bureaucratic revolution", involving public meetings of solidarity with the Serbs and Montenegrins of Kossovo. This ended with the fall from power of several politicians who had refused to submit to him. He also managed to engineer the fall of the governments of the autonomous regions of Vojvodina and of the Montenegro republic. The banning of his "meeting of truth" in Slovenia was a pretext for an economic declaration of war with a Serbian boycott of Slovene products. In Kossovo, his strategy was to be naked repression. This backfired because it created a total unity of the Albanian population, and even the Kossovo parliament, composed as it was of good "communists" voted through a status of republic. Milosevic then had to rule this, and autonomy for Vojvodina, as out of order. The Albanian language in the schools and the media was completely suppressed.

Milosevic could manipulate the central parliament through his three votes of Serbia and that of his Montenegrin satellites. This allowed the Serbian state to mobilise the army against the other republicans, aided by the Serbian militarists in the

ranks. In the other republics, where like in Croatia and Slovenia the market economy had penetrated quicker, the aggressive politics and conservatism of Milosevic, along with the economic crisis and the first disillusionment with economic liberalism provoked a re-birth of nearly forgotten nationalism, and a desire to move closer to Western Europe. In Croatia the regime had been severe in its suppression of anything smacking of Croat nationalism. The May 1990 elections led to victory for the most nationalist of the parties. The new Croat government consisted of the most number of ex-political prisoners as well as the largest number of WWII anti-fascist partisans than any other in Yugoslavia. A new regime was established, based on traditional values and the church, the model of Western democracy and the free market. Serbs in Croatia were given a status of national minority. Milosevic whipped up the reaction of the Serbian minority, referring to imminent genocide and the events of WWII.

Retreat

In Slovenia, the Yugoslav Army had to face a humiliating retreat, but the precedent was used to invade Croatia, with the "defence of the Croatian Serbs" used as justification. The insurgent Serbs of Knin, backed by the Army, waged an "anti-fascist" war, in reality a war to create a Greater Serbia.

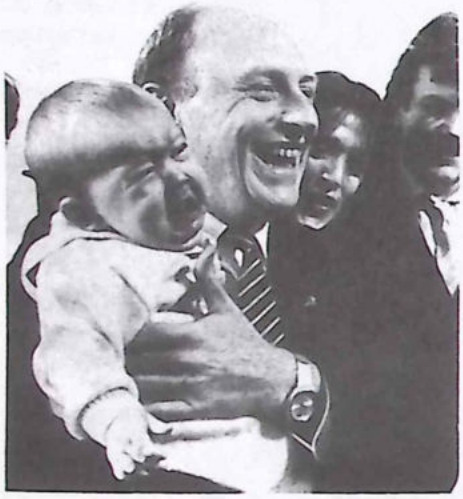
In the long-run both Serb and Croat nationalists may agree to a dividing up of the other Republics like Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whether the obscenities of this war continue is up to the working class wearied by war and economic hardship turning against the nationalist ruling cliques. This development of a revolutionary opposition is made more difficult by the repression of the Yugoslav anarchist movement. Many have been forced to flee to Italy, France and North America, whilst others may have been murdered and others infected by nationalism. Nevertheless, resistance is there, both in anti-war mobilisations and in desertions. 25,000 members of the Hungarian minority abandoned the country to escape conscription and 170 refused military service in Vojvodina. In Serbia two deserters were sentenced to prison for 15 and 9 months for "resistance to their superiors" whilst others fled abroad.

In the face of civil war and slaughter, we re-affirm the watchword of the revolutionary movement: unity and internationalism of the working masses against the barbarism of the bosses and nationalist demagogues.

LABOUR PAINS

THE ELECTION RESULT produced deep, deep gloom among the assorted leftists, be they social-democratic like the Socialist Movement, Eurocommunist, like the Democratic Left, Stalinist like the Communist Party of Britain and the *Morning Star* newspaper, or Trotskyist like as in Heinz (57 varieties).

In all of their papers (with exceptions like the Leninist, Revolutionary Communist Group) they time and again urged



the working class to vote Labour "without illusions". This across the board support for the Labour Party shows how much the Left is tied into the whole rotten stinking system. Instead of trying to encourage self-awareness within the working class, they aim to increase illusions in the Labour Party. Despite everything, despite the Labour Party's obvious anti-working class record in and out of government, they once again urged a vote for a party that is a capitalist party, implying that such a vote would be a working-class vote.

The Socialist Workers Party showed utter confusion in their analysis of Labour. Over the years they have described Labour as a Party of the trade union bureaucrats and their rhetoric has involved an apparently more anti-Labour approach than more orthodox Trotskyists practising entryism in the Labour Party, even though it was always a call for "vote Labour without illusions" that the SWP fell back on when it came to the elections. But now in an Open Letter to the Militant parliamentary candidates in the last election (25/4/92), they refer to the Labour Party as being "built out of successive strike waves — the New Unionism of the early 1890s, the syndicalist revolt before 1914, the great strikes at the end of the First World War", abandoning their previous analysis. This is in order to suck up to Militant and the Labour Left, in a desperate attempt to recruit more party fodder.

Break

But our class, the working class, can only fight the appalling attacks it is suffering from the boss class, by developing independent forms of struggle and organisation. And independence means a real break with Labour, which has been involved in the administration of the British capitalist system since the early decades of this century.

To urge a vote for Labour, even if weakly qualified by "without illusions", is to create illusions. In the absence of independent working class organisation, any working class vote for Labour shows the lack of confidence and self awareness prevailing at the moment.

The Leftists know that as soon as elected, Labour would have continued the policies of the bosses. They think that we need to be led through another "educational" experience of another Labour term of office, as if the last five Labour governments haven't been educational enough! They freely admit that a Labour government would be followed by a struggle between it and the working class, in which that government would have to be overthrown. In the meantime of course, working people would have to vote for a government which they would then attack. Logical, eh?

The regular round of elections means the sabotaging of working class struggle. Instead of building for independent struggle, the Leftists urge a suspension of the struggle, in order to scuttle off to the election booths and file in one by one, one of the most alienated, individualised acts under capitalism!

The whole of the Left has been thrown into disarray, disillusion and depression by the Tory victory. This will contribute to their further decline. We on the other hand, anarchist communists committed to helping our class establish self-consciousness and independent organisation, are not discouraged. We have no illusions, either in a Labour victory or in the realisation that the building of a revolutionary movement will not require extreme patience, dogged determination and ceaseless agitation and propaganda.

For a lowdown on the Labour Party, read our pamphlet, *The Myth of Labour's Socialism*, 60p including post from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 7QX.

Malcolm X and Black Nationalism

THE IDEAS OF the black militant, Malcolm X, have become popular again both through rap records and images of him on T-shirts and posters. Black separatists like Louis Farakhan have claimed him as their hero (when in fact Farakhan had been one of those in the Nation of Islam calling for his death!)

And yet a quick look at the man and his ideas reveals a much more complex figure than the black nationalist so often portrayed.

Malcolm X started out life as Malcolm Little, the son of a Baptist preacher in Nebraska. At the age of 23, serving a prison sentence for stealing, he came in contact with the ideas of the Nation of Islam (the Black Muslims) led by Elijah Muhammad, and through painful effort began to educate himself. After several years, he was released, and by 1954 was

the Muslim Minister of the New York Temple of the Black Muslims. He changed his name to "X" to stand for the African family whose real name he could never know.

He spent 12 years with the Nation of Islam. During that time he attracted much greater media coverage than Elijah Muhammad, due to his charismatic personality. This aroused Elijah's jealousy, used to running the Nation of Islam in a dictatorial fashion. The Nation of Islam was run by Elijah like a State-within a-State. By divine right he headed a Church-State. He alone appointed the Ministers of each Temple. The aim of the Nation was a completely separate black economy, with its own farms, groceries and restaurants.

The friction between Malcolm X and Elijah was seen in other ways. Malcolm became increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of militancy and the conservatism

Continued on page 14

Opportunity Knocks!

LOCAL AUTHORITIES POSSIBLY employ more workers than any other sector of the economy. In the past few years the councils, whether Labour, Tory or Liberal-Democrat, have competed with each other when advertising job vacancies to declare that they are "equal opportunity employers". Why, after years and years of radical-right toryism is such an apparently progressive slogan like "equal opportunities" so popular?

In part the answer lies in the fact that essentially oppressive systems often assume radical or pseudo radical slogans. Fascists in particular have been keen to borrow symbols, slogans etc from the left eg. the nazi red flag and Mussolini's "National- Syndicalism". Liberal-democratic states such as Britain do not shrink from cloaking reactionary strategies with superficial "radical" glosses. So we have a racist immigration system co-existing with race relation laws that ban racism! John Major's adoption of the slogan of the "classless society" is a similar device which is closely related to the idea of equal opportunities. What is remarkable about these is not their novelty (they've been around before) but the fact that some middle class lefties have fallen for them, hook, line and sinker.

The "classless society" and "equal opportunities" are both aspects of an old capitalist idea which early nineteenth century Liberals brought in to advance the life chances of up and coming capitalists at the expense of the entrenched aristocracy and establishment. Another term for them is the "meritocratic society". None of them have anything to do with equality but are devices designed to ensure *inequality* on the basis of unrestrained individualism. Hierarchy, differences in wealth and power are all to continue but are to be more open and flexible, allowing those with "ability" to gain access to the elite. Entrenched privilege is supposed to give way to the free movement of individuals up and down social and economic ladders on the basis of their efforts and abilities.

Strangely, this competition is not meant to apply to the inbuilt privileges of the Royal Family, the House of Lords, the public schools, the "old boys'" networks etc. No, equal opportunities is to apply to the public sector, primarily to increase competition within the middle class, teachers, council managers, social workers and the like. Real power, that of the establishment/ruling class remains untouched.

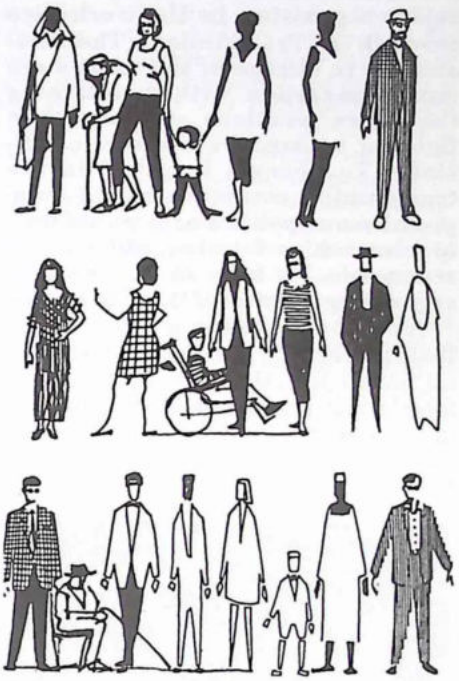
Cynical

The major determinant of success for people without wealth is education and as any sociological study will show, the main purpose of education is not to create equal opportunities but to erect hurdles so as to ration the personnel available for the plum jobs in our society. The middle class is aware of this and manipulates the state system to its advantage. The working class is so cynical about educational prospects that it has largely given up on the school system. Equal opportunities (in the 1950s and 1960s in education it was known as "equality of opportunity") will be sustained by the tiny number of working class children who do succeed in entering the middle class. Their success will be used as an ideological weapon to "prove" that equal opportunities exists. Those who "fail" will believe it is their fault. After all, hasn't everyone got the same opportunities?

Within the middle class equal opportunities is a vehicle for individuals to gain greater power and income for themselves. Of course, they don't believe in equality at all; they want to open up management whilst preserving unequal status and income. They want to get to the top. They feel that the barriers to their promotion are unfair- skin colour, sex etc aren't valid reasons for blocking their promotion. Within local authority structures, say a secondary school, teachers concerned with "wrongful" exclusion for themselves have no interest in the appallingly paid ancillary staff-cleaners, caretakers, technicians, kitchen staff etc. Equal opportunities are generally pursued without regard for the class system which operates within institutions, hence arguments for more women, black, gay managers, *not* the ending of income and status differentials.

Lavatory

As a system, equal opportunities provides an industry for middle class intellectuals from "minorities", giving them well-paid, high status jobs. One local authority in London recently advertised a post for a Women's Officer at £34,000 a year. One wonders how much the woman (almost certainly) who cleans out her lavatory will earn or how much real difference she will make to women in low-paid jobs. Race relations bodies provide a similar function of institutionalising and compartmentalising real issues relating to inequality. These detached experts develop systems of communication and language which are designed to exclude those very people that they claim to represent.



All in all, equal opportunities are a confidence trick designed to conceal the massive inequalities in our society. They can never really work because of institutionalised class differences. If they could be realised, they would be equally unacceptable, since an elite class based on wealth and power would give way to an elite based upon luck, aggressiveness and crawling to the boss. Equal opportunities may help local authorities smarten up their image, but they do nothing to relieve the distress caused by a society in which necessarily there are very few winners and very many losers.

The only sense in which the term might be used is in a society where class, sex and race privileges have been abolished, where genuine freedom exists and where individual and social freedoms are given the widest expression. Then, equal opportunities might mean a generalised system of plenty which could allow and promote self-fulfillment. Until that day, fight equal opportunities whilst fighting racism, sexism and class oppression.

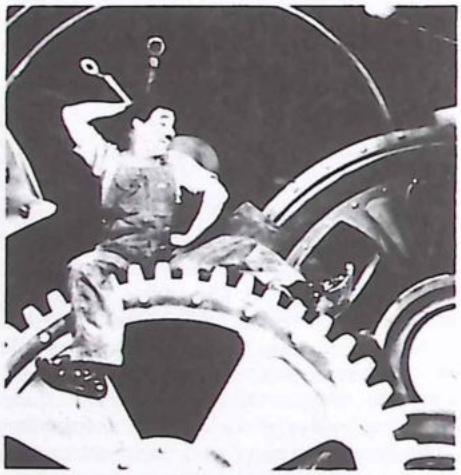
MUSIC! MUSIC! MUSIC!

24 Track cassette 1.50 + p&p. Includes tracks from Doom, E.N.T. Hellkrusher, Embittered, Slander, Armed Relapse, Decontrol, Bone Idle, Forethought, Filthy Charity, and Nailbomb. Some of proceeds will go to ACF press fund. Orders through ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Organising in the Workplace

AS ANARCHIST-COMMUNISTS we reject organising in the workplace through the Trade Unions. The bureaucrats in charge of the unions are more concerned with maintaining their own positions of power than fighting to improve workers conditions. To become involved in the trade union structure would compromise our politics as it would lead to hierarchies forming, elitism and reformism. We have to find ways of organising outside of the unions.

Anarcho-syndicalists try to overcome these problems by forming non-hierarchical unions controlled directly by all the members. In principle this is obviously an improvement but in practice they have found it difficult to escape the problems of working as trade unions.



As these organisations are confined to the workplace only, they tend to concentrate on work orientated demands such as better wages or conditions. Whilst these are obviously necessary, revolutionaries should be broadening the struggle and raising expectations, not just concentrating on simple economic demands.

To function effectively as unions is at odds with anarchist communist principles. For a union, winning demands means dealing directly with the bosses — negotiating with them to try and create a fairer form of exploitation. It is surely a contradiction to claim to be for the revolutionary destruction of capitalism if you've just finished having a business meeting with the bosses. Having people to negotiate with the bosses leads to the creation of leaderships and hierarchies — an obvious example of this is the Spanish CNT at the time of the Civil War. The flaws in this organisation led to a leadership being formed which then proceeded to make many mistakes, one of the most notable being entering the Republican government as ministers. This can't just be blamed on the individuals, the fault also lay in the organisation which allowed it to happen. As anarchist communists we have to find ways of working which do not allow power structures to develop, yet enable effective agitation to be carried out.

Outside

Only by working outside of unions can we do this. Unions are by their very nature reformist and as such should be left to reformers. It is possible to be a revolutionary and to be a trade unionist, but not to be a revolutionary trade unionist. It may be possible to do useful work as a member of a trade union, if only by using meetings as a forum for putting our ideas across to the more militant sections of the working class. We should however be careful to avoid being drawn into the union bureaucracy and it is evident that the main thrust of our activity should be outside of the unions.

In the immediate short term the first step towards workplace organisation should be the linking up of anarchist communists within an industry to form a network. This should be broad based to try and bring in as many people as possible. The networks should include all the people involved in the industry who would be interested in bringing about anarchism — not just people involved in working for the industry but as far as possible consumers as well as producers. For example if an education industry network was set up it would include teachers, technicians, office staff as well as students and pupils.

By bringing in as many people as possible the networks will not become dominated by one section and so will be more orientated towards the wishes of the community.

Starting

The obvious starting point of a fledgeling industrial network is to begin producing propaganda. It is easy for only a few people to make and distribute leaflets, or put up some posters giving an anarchist view point on a particular struggle.

There are, unfortunately, problems with openly disseminating anarchist propaganda at work. Bosses will not look kindly on this and when in a position of weakness it may be necessary for anarchists to only carry out low key work to avoid victimisation. Comrades from outside the workplace may help overcome this. This outside help could come from within the network eg — comrades could demonstrate mutual aid by distributing leaflets outside each others place of employment.

When it becomes possible a paper concerned with the industry could be produced to be sold to friends and colleagues, as well as others concerned with the industry. As the propaganda takes effect and the networks grow it will be possible to move onto more long term objectives. In particularly large or class-conscious workplaces Anarchist-Communist workplace groups can be set up. Whilst these will retain their involvement in the wider network they will be able to focus more closely on the issues at hand and be able to react immediately to any developments at work.

A group can also have an educational role, injecting useful ideas into a struggle. It can show people that real and lasting victories can only come about by people directly taking control of their own lives — without leaders, be they company director or union bosses. As people learn the lessons of past struggles they will develop more effective methods and a workplace group of Anarchist-Communists would encourage and be active in this, whilst themselves learning through experience at the same time.

We can see that by organising at work we can fight effectively on one of the main battlefields of the class struggle. It is vital for revolutionaries to agitate in every area of life, showing how capitalism attacks us in all areas. By organising in the community, both inside and outside of the workplace we can work to bring about our ultimate goal of social revolution.

ACE

Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from **c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.**

Making Progress. Describes how and why the ACF was formed, and the continuing evolution of our ideas and practice. A "beginners' guide" to ACF! 30p & SAE.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary libertarian theory and practice. 60p & SAE.

Myth of Labour's Socialism. Labourism, the ideology that holds the Labour Party together is decaying. This pamphlet explains why, and examines what opportunities will be opened up by the collapse of the Labour myth. 60p & SAE.

Anarchy in the USSR. A New Beginning. Edited by Phil Ruff. ASP. £3. 80 pages.

This pamphlet is a handy introduction to the rebirth of the Russian anarchist movement. It consists mainly of documents drawn from anarchist and syndicalist organisations, as well as an account of workers uprisings in the 1960s by a Russian anarchist.

Unfortunately many mistakes made by the anarchists during the Russian revolution appear to be being repeated. "Synthesis" organisations like the Moscow Union of Anarchists, combine mutually incompatible groups like the Revolutionary union of Anarcho-Communists, the Christian Anarchists(!) and the "dissident anarchist fringe". The Anarcho-Syndicalist grouping KAS (Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists) calls for a "system of stateless market socialism with mixed forms of property". In fact, some of the KAS leaders have been compromised by their dealings with the trade unions and attempts by elements of the fragmented Communist Party to construct a British-style Labour Party. Andrei Isaev, for example, quoted in the pamphlet, has become chief editor of the paper of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, besides attempting with the head of the Socialist Party, Kagalitsky, and various union bureaucrats to help set this Labour party up.

The most important and interesting document here is by Vadim Damier who broke with KAS and fights for an anarchist-communist position in the group IREAN (Initiative of Revolutionary Anarchists). As he says, "I am for direct action and against the free market... I envisage a federation of free communes... this federation would be on the basis of solidarity and would decide on where, how, what and when things should be produced. Through such co-ordination a libertarian communist society would be achieved."

Poll Tax Rebellion. Danny Burns. AK Press and Attack International. £4.95. 205 pages.

The sinking of the Tory flagship, ironically enough involving the Battle of Trafalgar Square, is well documented in this account by Danny Burns, a non-aligned member of the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation National Committee. He describes the growth of the movement, neighbourhood organisation, the town hall demonstrations and riots, Trafalgar Square, anti-bailiff work and the role of groups like Militant. The denunciation of the actions of the Trafalgar Square rioters by Militant leaders like Sheridan and Nally is well-covered. Perhaps even more important is how the All Britain Federation and some of its component Anti-Poll Tax Unions were manipulated, gerrymandered and packed. Others were genuine expressions of ordinary people's determination to resist, and in some of these, forms of organisation developed that empowered all concerned. For example, as an activist in the book says, "We rotate the chair at every meeting. People take the chair now who would never have dreamed of taking chairs of anything. That's the beauty of it. It's great. It's become like a social education."

There was mass support for the anti-poll tax movement, particularly in Scotland. However, the book tends to let euphoria get in the way of political judgement. In some areas, local anti- poll tax groups after possibly fairly large public meetings initially, received very little support and depended on the activities of a few. The packing of anti-poll tax groups by Militant did lead to demobilisation in some areas. These issues are not adequately dealt with.

As the book says, the defeat of the Poll Tax was a great moment in British working class history. However, the author is quite sanguine about capitalism carrying on "pretty much as usual" and notes how much capitalism has fragmented society by breaking up communities and work-place organisation. However, capitalism has also created a potential for strengthening neighbourhood communities with the less well-off being ghettoised in the inner city and suburban estates. Resistance was built up through the informal networks of these areas. The book argues that these will remain for some time as the strongest bases of action and should focus on more than one issue.

There does seem an overly optimistic hope that these informal organisations thrown up by the anti-poll tax struggles will provide the nucleus for a new community-based mass movement. Unfortunately, the truth is that a demobilisation has taken place since the defeat of the Poll Tax. Many anti-poll tax groups have disappeared completely, others are empty shells and, meanwhile, large numbers of people are still being pursued for non-payment. The series of cosmetic legislation put through by the Tories gave the impression that the Poll Tax was finished when, in fact, it is still there and many are unable to pay and are being pursued by the State with dogged determination.

On the positive side, never were so many people in Britain involved in direct confrontation with the law. Many were involved in political activity during the struggle. Many women, as had happened before with the miners' strike, were galvanised and transformed. As one woman activist is quoted as saying, "I just cannot return to being just an ordinary housewife". Before the movement, many working class people unquestioningly paid their bills. All this has changed. This feeling could, for example, be mobilised to resist rent rises.

We realise there is a general demobilisation and lack of struggle at the moment. However, unlike the Labour left and the vanguard parties, we know that sooner or later mass movements will reemerge and we must prepare for that. We think society can be transformed, unlike those who, as Jim Kelman, a quoted Scottish activist says, believe in "compromise and negotiation".

The book clearly describes the struggle in the community as a basis for advocating community-based mass struggle. Unfortunately, though partly borne out by practical experience, this reinforces an unbalanced view of how struggle can and should develop. As anarchist-communists we have always argued for struggle in both the community and workplaces, with neither being prioritised. This was our strength during the anti-poll tax struggle when Trotskyists and others were arguing for workplace struggle to the detriment, and despite the material evidence to the contrary, of the effectiveness of community struggle. Unfortunately, in reaction to this discredited approach, Danny Burns goes too far in the opposite direction. Resistance to capitalism and the State must be, and we think will develop, in both the estates and neighbourhoods and in the factories and offices.

Unfinished Business: The Politics of Class War. AK Press. £4.50. 186 pages.

The Class War Federation argue in this book for the "re-creation of an independent revolutionary organisation within the working class, under the control of no-one but themselves". It explains the politics and structure of the CWF and has sections on Capitalism, the State, Class, Class Struggle and Revolutionary Organisations. As it modestly points out, it does not claim, like a left-wing party, to have all the answers. it is written in a clear style, as devoid of jargon as possible. Indeed, though it does not explicitly say as much, it is in many ways an excellent expose of anarchist-communist ideas.

The section on capitalism accurately describes the workings of the system, taking in consumerism and the role trade unions play in the maintenance of capitalism. Perhaps more attention could have been paid to the development of state capitalism in the USSR and its satellites, China, Cuba and Vietnam. Any idea of class struggle revolutionary theory must be emphatically divorced from the sham of state capitalism masquerading as "communism".

Class War enthusiastically reminds us of the traditions of the British working class which have been too often ignored by the Left. A minor quibble, and it is minor, would be the omission of the Diggers, much more radical than the Levellers in the English Civil War and the uncritical mention of the "volunteers that went to fight fascism in Spain during the Spanish Civil War". Remember, apart from the volunteers organised by the Independent Labour Party, many were members of the Communist Party and thoroughly imbued with Stalinism. They were unwittingly or knowingly involved in the sabotage of the Spanish revolution through Stalin's international, the Comintern. And why is this revolutionary tradition only British, not including for example the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the German Revolution of 1918, the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and May 1968 in France, amongst others? A re-affirmation of the British revolutionary tradition should not mean that the internationalist baby gets thrown out with the bathwater.

The book makes no bones about the problems facing a potential revolution. It correctly criticises most of the anarchist movement (more of this later) for its ineffectiveness and selects an excellent passage from Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement* to highlight this. It counters the charges of anti-intellectualism levelled against the CWF by saying that "our aim is to make everyone an intellectual". It draws out the better points of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarians ie theoretical and tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism, and endorses them. These and other passages are remarkably close to the positions of the ACF. We might not endorse words like "self-management (which could imply a form of self-managed capitalism) and we would not be so eager to use Nicaragua as an example of revolutionary struggle (you have to separate out the Sandinista government from any popular organisations that developed there, whilst asking how much the latter were manipulated by the former). Overall, however, the comrades of Class War should be congratulated on this book. We hope the criticisms made here are received in a comradely and constructive way, in the spirit in which they were given.

But hang on! I hear many readers now cry. If you agree as much with the politics of Class War, why aren't the ACF and CWF in the same organisation? The fact is there remain many differences of approach, and there is a problem with the ideas expressed by Class War in this book actually being translated into practice. But, yes, the development of ideas in the book is a healthy development and who knows what kind of dialogue could develop in the future?

LETTERS

Secret Ballot

Dear comrades,

Why does "Big Brother" keep a secret ballot?

Demokrassy prides itself on the fact that the ballot is secret. Even this pandering to the people is a lie as I found out on the 9th April. The voting clerk provides you with a ballot sheet including a number. This number is also on the stub and behind the stub they also write in pencil a coded number for your address. So much for a secret ballot. The ballot provides those in power with all the secret voting information they need. When you vote they cross off your name from the list. So they know whether you vote or not and which party you vote for.

I was considering voting Labour but when I saw the amount of voting information the minions of "Big Brother" have I reverted to type and scored a black cross over the whole voting form.

Its the same old story, one people, one country and three potential führers, but which one will it be, or will they all have to thrash about in a "hung" parliament. I'm tempted to say if you have a hung parliament why not take the opportunity to hang all the power-crazed bastards once and for all, but being a rationalist humanitarian, how about putting them all on the dole and making them pay poll tax as well!

Yours in freedom,
A.A., Edinburgh

Money?

Dear *Organise!*

In your article (issue 26) 'After the Revolution' you state about councils being operated on anarchist communist principles. "Equality of income" is mentioned. Surely in an anarchist communist society money which is a means of exchange will be abolished and people will take from society according to self determining needs and give according to their ability. The alternative of equal income is unworkable as how can anyone possibly decide what each individual gets in terms of a monetary reward?

The article goes on to talk about equal access to the resources and products of society. I think instead of equal access you should use the words free access.

There may well be some things especially after the revolution which will have to be rationed, however that will be the least of our problems, as we will have to get down to the work of making sure essentials such as food, good homes, healthcare, etc are freely available throughout the world.

By and large I enjoyed reading your magazine which is refreshingly different from the Leninist/Trotskyist drivel which makes me very cross.

For communism/anarchism

D.M. (Manchester)

Letters from Abroad

Dear comrades,

Thank you very much for your magazine. I think that your magazine is very good. I read other magazines which are published by other anarchists in the West but your magazine is the best. With our magazine I can't compare it. You have very good articles about economy and other articles are interesting too. But, on the other hand, I think your magazine has too few articles about the anarchist movement in Europe, especially Eastern Europe. Some of your articles will be translated and published in our magazine *Autonomie*.

Our address in Prague is:
Autonomie, CAS, Box 223
111 21 Praha 1, Czechoslovakia

Dear comrades,

Hello from Russia!

I'm a Russian anarchist, a member of a little anarchist group in a little town near Moscow. When my friends and I have read No 25 of *Organise!* magazine, then we have understood that we agree with ACF Aims and Principles and that much views and opinions of ACF coincide with ours... Our group is very little (consists of 6 members) and begun its activity 3 months ago. Unfortunately we have very little information about anarchist movement in other countries. Can't you help us and send something about anarchists in other countries and (of course) additional information about ACF? We are particularly interested in the Anarchist Communist Federation's views on the last events in Russia, Boris Yeltsin's role in them and the last events in Afghanistan.

M.S.
Chernogolovko, Moscow Region.

Dear *Organise!*

I've bought one of your issue (No. 24) and I've found it very good. Especially the texts which speak about anarchist theory. In France we have anarchist newspaper but all their articles are based on actuality and none about the history of anarchy or its thoughts. I know that actuality is important and must be seen through a critical point of view but it must not be the only subject in an anarchist magazine in my opinion. To conclude about this point I would tell you: "Continue the theory articles!".

I do a 'zine *L'epingle Noire* and do my best to change "their world where I've been bought" (demonstrations, pasting-up in the streets, promotion for anarchist newspapers; "Courant alternatif", *L'epingle Noire...*). For the third issue of my 'zine I've already done an interview of one member of the Class Struggle Anarchist Network (from England of course).

Y.L., Guichen, France.

MALCOLM X

Continued from page 10.

and corruption of the Nation's leaders. The Nation had consistently criticised the civil rights movement for their non-violent methods, but Malcolm X saw that they were able to pull out large numbers of black people, and wished to become involved in the demonstrations.

The final break with the Nation came with the position taken by Malcolm X over the assassination of President Kennedy. He stated that those who enslaved black people through violence would often die violently, and saw no need to mourn. Elijah Muhammad had wanted the Nation to remain quiet on this question. Malcolm X was forced out in March 1964.

He now set up a rival group, Muslim Mosque Inc, and after a pilgrimage to Mecca, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, which was on a political, non-sectarian basis.

He was an independent leader of his own movement for only one year, before he was shut down, probably by Black Muslims, themselves possibly manipulated by the CIA. His 12 years as a faithful servant of Elijah Muhammad have to be divorced from his brief later period.

What he did do was drop the idea of a separate black nation in America. This took place slowly, and only a month before his death was he able to state that he no longer believed in a black State in America. "I believe in a society in which people can live like human beings on the basis of equality". In an interview printed after his death, he pointed out that he had not been using the term for several months, adding; "But I still would be hard pressed to give a specific definition of the over-all philosophy which I think is necessary for the liberation of black people in this country".

However, this process of development involved him in a number of illusions. He travelled through Africa, the Middle East and Europe and remarked that, "All of the countries that are emerging from under the shackles of colonialism are turning towards socialism... It's impossible for a white person to believe in capitalism and not believe in racism. You can't have capitalism without racism". He developed anti-capitalist positions, but was fooled by the "socialist" rhetoric of the newly emergent African states.

Ballots

Similarly, his position on parliamentary activity was far from abstentionist. "Don't be throwing out any ballots. A ballot is like a bullet. You don't throw your ballots until you see a target, and if that target is not within your reach, keep your ballot in your pocket".

Malcolm X was developing his ideas. As he himself said, "My whole life has been a chronology of changes". Perhaps further development would have moved him in a more revolutionary direction, perhaps not.

He was breaking with black nationalism. Unfortunately the number of revolutionary anarchists in the black working class was very small, and could not act as a powerful influence on his ideas.

The body of ideas he developed is not coherent, because of his constant evolution towards an anti-capitalist position. While the black nationalists claim him as their own, it can be seen from an examination of his ideas that he was moving beyond such a position. As he stated just before he was murdered, "I believe that there will ultimately be a clash between the oppressed and those that do the oppressing. I believe that there will be a clash between those that want freedom, justice and equality for everyone and those who want to continue the systems of exploitation. I believe that there will be that kind of clash, but I don't think that it will be based upon the colour of the skin, as Elijah Muhammad had taught it".

Next issue: the Black Panthers, Black Nationalism and the Black American anarchists.

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary, class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution.

In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons about self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

JOIN US!

War, exploitation, crime, poverty, racism, mass unemployment... If you're a reader of *Organise!* you'll know how rotten to the very core the system is. You have the capacity to critically question, to look the real world in the eye. You're not a dodger of the uncomfortable issues,and you've long ago given up believing in the hype of the politicians. You understand that whatever its weaknesses, the working class united cannot be defeated.

If, on the other hand, you're a Tory or Labour supporter, and if you're a still reading this, you're kidding yourself. Get serious or keep riding the train to hell. We're here to derail it.

If you're a Trotskyist and you're feeling sad, we don't blame you. For years you got radical, attacked Labour... and then were told to vote for Labour "with no illusions". Are your leaders for real? Do yourself a favour and ditch the leadership mentality.

The next step

The major political parties are only interested in maintaining the system. The vanguardist revolutionary groups are experts — in sabotaging struggles for their own party-building ends. What's needed is a credible alternative to the twin horrors of the 'free' market and state-managed socialism, otherwise known as state capitalism

Forward

We need to build a movement, organising in class struggle groups both locally and nationally. This enables us to work more effectively, co-ordinating our activity and supporting each other so that we are the credible alternative. Such an organisation would begin to make its presence known through effective propaganda and action whilst developing its

theory in a lively, dynamic way in interaction with practice. This is the kind of organisation the ACF is building.

The ACF works towards a social revolution, not to seize power itself, but participating in a revolutionary process as working class people, to assist the class as a whole to destroy the present system and build a free society run through mass decision making.

We urge all those who agree with our aims and principles to join our organisation, the better to take part in this coming about. Write to our national address for details. Apply for membership. Now's the time!

Federalism

THOSE ANARCHISTS WHICH make up the major part of the movement are in one sense collectivist in the sense that they perceive the anarchist goal as being based upon communities of one sort or another. Anarchist-communists, in particular, envisage freedom and security etc within the context of a solidaristic society. In other words, our goal is not a world of individuals concerned simply with their own well-being, regardless of others but one in which personal freedom can be encouraged and developed for the benefit of all. Freedom comes from, and not in opposition to, community.

It is a misfortune of "collectivist" anarchists that the popular image of anarchism promoted for decades by the mass media is one of isolated individuals bent upon terror. The reality is that in the main, anarchists work in groups and some, like the ACF, seek to build large-scale national and even international organisations. We want a mass anarchist movement. The problems that present themselves, once we reject individualism, is how to organise the movement and, hopefully, a future society which gives the benefits of solidarity with the preservation of individual and collective freedom. How do we, in our revolutionary struggle and the eventual transformation of society, avoid the problems of bureaucracy, elites and power?

To quote from Malatesta, the Italian anarchist, "An anarchist organisation must... allow for complete autonomy and independence and therefore full responsibility to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it is useful to come together for co-operative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfil one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme." (*Il Risveglio*, October 15, 1927) In other words, for an anarchist organisation to operate effectively on a principled basis, its members must combine freedom with responsibility, full participation in the decision-making processes with a commitment to carry out collective decisions. No anarchist organisation can be effective if its members act against the collective aims and methods. Equally, however, no organisation can be anarchist without total freedom to take part in the formulation of goals, aims and methods plus, ultimately, the right to withdraw from this process.

Summit

The usual method adopted by anarchists to combine freedom with organisation has been federalism. This idea is the reversal of the standard form of organisation in which decisions are made at the top by an élite and carried out by the rank and file. Under a federal system autonomous members of the organisation, organised within groups or branches at the base, make the decisions which are carried out by the organisation. Political power flows from the base to the summit, or rather from the circumference to the centre, since organisation is "horizontal" (ie based on equality) not "vertical" (ie based on inequality and hierarchy). In other words, anarchist organisations should be expressions of the collective voice, not directing centres which control people.

The basic "unit" is the member who voluntarily joins the organisation. Usually a member will be part of a local or industrial group which freely agrees to join a larger unit at say the district level. The district grouping is in turn affiliated to a regional body which is part of a national and ultimately international organisation. For example, smaller collectives take responsibility for their immediate areas of concern, involve themselves in other layers of decision-making and are bound by those decisions. A commune might perhaps decide on the location of a new hospital but the damming of a river which has much wider consequences, affecting several communes, would have to be agreed upon by a federation of communes. So long as each "unit" accepts the goals and methods etc it influences the orientation of the organisation. Should a "unit" disagree with decisions reached, it has the right to leave the organisation. However, if it has participated in the decision-making process, to quote Malatesta again, it has a duty "to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme" so long as it remains in the organisation.

For a federal system to operate in an anarchist fashion there must be the greatest possible degree of involvement by members, free communication and blocks to prevent the development of leaders (eg. rotation and recall of any "officials" and ban on full-time posts). Strictly speaking, there should not be any officials as such. Each layer/segment of the organisation represents its views directly through the organisation's press and through temporary elected delegates. However, in the end, the health of any organisation is a reflection of the membership's enthusiasm and commitment.

Not only the anarchist organisation but also the anarchist world society would be run on a federal basis. There would be a multi-compartmental system of decision-making, from again the local to the international sphere. Each unit would have the right to secede and would have the right to self-determination in respect of its own affairs. The basic social unit would probably be the Commune or Soviet which would voluntarily federate to a wider body, say the region or the province. Delegates from the communes would at this next level concern itself with issues relevant to its mandate ie regional issues. The region in turn would affiliate to a national body or its equivalent since we expect artificial "nation-states" to disappear in an international society.

Ideal

So federalism is a straightforward form of organisation which combines the maximum individual and local freedom and autonomy with collective direction. It permits planning on a wide scale on the basis of mutual agreement, whether it be the revolutionary organisation or the anarchist society. Federalism, with its vital right to secession, safeguards the minority from the majority.

However, this is an ideal picture and

federalism alone cannot create or preserve a free society. It must be combined with the elimination of centralised power, hierarchy, authority and inequality. Where these are preserved federalism becomes a sham which would fail its first major test, especially a potential secession.

In theory the Soviet Union was a federation of republics which enjoyed the right of secession. In reality, it was probably the most centralised of twentieth century nations. The self- proclaimed federation of Yugoslavia was (like the USSR) a federation of mutually hostile nations which were united at gunpoint. When in both countries the central authority failed, local nationalisms and rivalries re-emerged and the pseudo-federations disintegrated. These false-federations, based upon social, national and state inequalities, involved none of the essential features of the anarchist vision. Free federation is possible. It is the task of revolutionary anarchists and the working class to create it.

T/SOR/16/11

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

50p

Jan-March
1993
Issue 29

WHEN THE MARCHING'S OVER

WHAT'S NEXT?

INSIDE:

Unions: Debate, Miners, Italian Workers, Leadership, Intellectualism, And Much More!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 22nd February for features and reviews, and 5th March for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

I am particularly interested in the Anarchist Communist Federation's views on .....

.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

Who We Are ...

THE ANARCHIST Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:

Aberystwyth
Ashford
Aylesbury
Chesterfield
Chester-le-Street
Coventry
Derry
Devon
Hexham
Leeds
London
Manchester
Merthyr Tydfil
Middlesborough
Newcastle
Nottingham
Portsmouth
Saffron Walden
Stockport
Stoke-on-Trent
Worcester

The ACF promotes the building of a strong and active anarchist movement in Britain and internationally and has contact with like-minded anarchists overseas.

For all contact write to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

PRESS FUND

THE PRESS FUND exists so you can contribute to the everyday running and production costs of *Organise!* Money is always needed for printing, postage, layout materials and a host of other things. We also want to see *Organise!* produced more frequently, with more pages and with a greater print run. Money is also needed to finance more pamphlets.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

£60, Sheffield; £100, London; £5, Ponytypool; £8, Suffolk.

An important role

ORGANISE! CONTINUES the tradition of criticism and analysis of all the major problems in developing both revolutionary theory and movement. We think that *Organise!* has an important role to play in the growth of a real revolutionary movement. We know from rising sales that many of our readers feel the same.

But we need your support to help keep the furnace burning.

Sell *Organise!*

Although our sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!*

You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

How to Order *Organise!* Back Issues

BACK ISSUES OF Organise! (from issue 14 to issue 28 inclusive) are still available, from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner Virus.

Back issues cost 20p & sae each and include the following:

Available

- *Organise!* 22: Recession; poll tax; warfare state; Commune; Asia.
- *Organise!* 23: Iraq Interview; Greens; ANC; pits; police
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- *Organise!* 25: Columbus; Freedom; SWP; Filipino Interview
- *Organise!* 26: Women & Revolution; Direct action; US Greens.
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I enclose £3 for a four-issue sub, or £6 for a four issue supporting sub). Add 25% for overseas subs or institutions. Return form to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

MUSIC! MUSIC! MUSIC!

24 track cassette £1.50 + p&p. Includes tracks from Doom, E.N.T. Hellkrusher, Embittered, Slander, Armed Relapse, Decontrol, Bone Idle, Forethought, Filthy Charity, and Nailbomb. Some of proceeds will go to ACF Press Fund. Orders through ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

WERE YOU bewildered, or maybe sickened, by all those back-bench Tory MPs, *The Sun*, *The Star*, Paddy Ashdown and the bishops all expressing horror at the pit closures and pledging support? Were you maybe suspicious of the support the Labour Party gave the miners after how they behaved in 1984-5? And what did you think about Arthur Scargill getting chummy with the well-heeled residents of Kensington?

Alongside the threatened closure of 31 pits comes the massive redundancies and lay-offs in the car industry, amongst building workers and steelworkers and in London's teaching hospitals and the docks. The list goes on and on. Those still in employment in both the public and private sector face wage freezes and further rounds of sackings. A massive attack on the working class is being launched to pay for the chronic recession.

The massive pits closure was a spark that lit a big flare-up of anger throughout our class. The TUC mobilised hundreds of thousands of people. Yet, several months later, where is the anger, where are the mass mobilisations?

It is likely that the announcement of the pit closures was a play for power by Heseltine in order to win the leadership of the Tory Party. He banked on the support of the Thatcherite wing of the party, hoping that they would unite with him against their hated foe, the miners. He failed to realise that their animosity to him overrode any such consideration. The attack on the miners would have come sooner or later, but it was ineptly and untimely chosen.

Phoney

In order to defuse this anger the TUC, the media and other sections of the Establishment began their phoney campaign to save the mines. What could be more obscene than to see Winston Churchill, whose father ordered the shooting of miners, supposedly running to their defence. Or all the lie-sheets of the media, which unleashed a barrage of anti-miner propaganda, now lauding their praises.

The TUC and Labour Party, actively aided by *The Daily Mirror*, pushed for the two demonstrations of October 25 and 30, and both of these demonstrations were massive. After listening quietly to speeches by assorted clergymen, Liberal Democrat and Labour leaders and union bureaucrats, the demonstrations dispersed without incident. Both were restrained and 'orderly'. The TUC had won the day. They had successfully let a little steam be let off, without the crowds taking any radical action. They feel that this is enough now, and have no need to call any demonstrations. The arrival of marching miners in London in late December was not met by a demonstration, but consisted of a tour around the capital in an open-top bus!

The leadership of the **National Union of Miners** connived at this. They were content to mobilise 'public opinion' and to go through the courts to stop the closure of the pits. All this was designed to head off any action amongst both the miners and other sections of workers. No appeals were made for solidarity action from other workers in other industries, either those directly or indirectly affected by the knock-on effect of the closure of the pits.

Scargill is no different from other union bureaucrats. He uses radical rhetoric to disguise his manoeuvres. This writer remembers with anger the day a mass picket was planned to blockade Grunwicks in North London, where a long hard strike had gone on for months. Scargill turned up with a large battalion of miners, and then proceeded to lead them and thousands of others away from the factory on a walk-about. The mass picket was sabotaged. On that day in 1977 I was left standing with a hundred or so others, surrounded and outnumbered by the police. Yes, Scargill is a past master at defusing struggles!

Nationalist

With his allies in the Labour Left, like Skinner, Scargill talks about the need for 'British' coal, echoing the strong nationalist message in the TUC-Labour campaign of 'For Jobs and Recovery'. He has used the opportunity of going through the courts to delay any actions by miners, in the same way he called off mass pickets in the Great Strike after court orders. The left of the NUM apparatus, like Dave Douglass, has happily gone along with this use of the courts and obsession with public opinion.

As for the extreme left, they once again demonstrated their attachment to the unions and to the TUC, totally discredited among many workers. The **Socialist Workers Party** demanded that the TUC call a general strike! As if the TUC was willing or capable of doing such a thing. When the TUC did call a General Strike in 1926 they succeeded in limiting and enfeebling it and brought about the biggest defeat our class has ever suffered in this country. Groups like the **Communist Party of Great Britain** (*The Leninist*) rabbited on about preparing for a General Strike, with or without the TUC. Any effective strike action would mean not with or without but against the TUC!

All these different elements, from the TUC and Labour to the extreme left are attempting to limit and blinker any actions that the working class will take. The demonstrations and related activity were designed to divert and demoralise. People were meant to feel that they had done their bit, that after all, nothing could be changed, and that after a dreary walk through driving rain, they must go home and accept "Things as they are".

ACE

Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Making Progress. Describes how and why the ACF was formed, and the continuing evolution of our ideas and practice. A 'beginners guide' to ACF! 30p & SAE.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary libertarian theory and practice. 60p & SAE.

Myth of Labour's Socialism. Labourism, the ideology that holds the Labour Party together, is decaying. This pamphlet explains why, and examines what opportunities will be opened up by the collapse of the Labour myth. 60p & SAE.

Refuse

But we are among those who are unwilling to knuckle under, who refuse to accept that social change cannot and will not come. The anger is still there, and it could ignite a social inferno!

The miners have been weakened by the defeat of the Great Strike. They have been decimated by redundancies. They cannot fight alone. If they do so, they will be defeated again, and demoralisation will be even greater. Any action by the miners must be independent action, decided upon collectively and with fully mandated committees, which actively seek to go out to other workers, those in industries threatened by the shutdown of the mines, like rail and steel workers, but also other workers under threat like health workers, tube workers, bank and insurance workers. Any occupation of the pits cannot take place in isolation, as some have advocated. They must go hand in hand with the sending out of delegates to other workplaces and industries, to mobilise regional and national stoppages. Blockades of road and rail on a mass scale could be usefully employed. The unemployed must be effectively involved in the struggle, with flying columns going to the dole queues. The working class population of each area, including housewives, the young and the old must be involved in any collective decision-making and mass action.

The battle to defend the miners is not just for the miners themselves. If the boss class win this battle they will feel even more confident and will press on with renewed confidence in cutting jobs and slashing services. The miners fight is the fight of the entire working class. Solidarity action is vital. Workers at Drax power station, a thousand of them, showed an example, when they struck in support of the miners on October 21. And the anger is building up in other workplaces. Health workers at University College Hospital in London successfully won their strike recently. Militant action is beginning to be taken. But action must come not in an isolated way, but with united joint action, seeking to draw in other workers.

STRUGGLE WORLDWIDE

Nigeria

TO CAMOUFLAGE THE nature of the military dictatorship in Nigeria the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida convoked elections for December 1992. The military regime has created its own political parties for the election, the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention.

In the run up to the elections the military regime has increased its arbitrary detentions of political activists, prohibition of certain political activities, imposition of legal edicts and all sorts of militarist interventions.

The repression coincided with the increased balance of payments deficit (40 billion dollars) and hyper-inflation (32%) combined with the increasing social problems.

The increasing desperation of the regime has resulted in the closing of the universities since July and the persecution of university teachers and students.

The Babangida regime has also harassed journalists, arresting people working on the *Lagos Daily News* and an independent newspaper, the *African Guardian*. The four journalists arrested on the *African Guardian* had reported the murder of two students during clashes with the armed forces.

Among those still in detention are the four comrades of the **Awareness League**, a libertarian socialist group, Udemba Chuks, Garba Audu, Kingsley Etioni and James Ndubuisi.

They were arrested after one of the demonstrations by students and workers which have spread throughout the country during the last few months. The Awareness League comrades are imprisoned in appalling conditions.

The Awareness League has launched a campaign for their release, along with all the others detained. Any donations and pledges of support will be much appreciated. Make contact via Awareness League c/o Samuel Mbah, PO Box 28, Aghani, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Moldavia

TWO ANARCHISTS have fallen victim to the authoritarian nationalist regime in Moldavia. On 29 April Tamara Burdenko was dismissed for "violation of work discipline" from the review *Kodry* where she had worked for 14 years.

The real reason is the politics of her and her husband Igor Hergenreorder, who is disabled. Igor has written several articles in the opposition press analysing the warmongering policies of the Pridneestrovye regime. The Moldavian KGB have pursued Igor for these articles.

The chief editor has denied that Tamara was dismissed for political reasons. He is an ardent supporter of the government.

Dictator

The ultra-right National Christian Party has been organising a campaign to rehabilitate the Romanian fascist dictator Ion Antonescu, an ally of Hitler. This campaign has been supported by various government officials who follow the Romanian government. Igor and Tamara were among those who denounced fascism in a press declaration in July.

Since then the two libertarians have had their door kicked down by an unknown attacker who fled when the neighbours intervened. Two days later another unknown handed Igor a sack containing a dog's head. The day after, the TV news informed the public that the Russian Trans-Dniester separatists were setting up anarchist groups in the Moldavian capital. The State Public Prosecutor intends to press charges against the two, and their lawyer has said he will no longer defend them.

Send telegrams and postcards of protest to the following addresses. This is not a waste of time as the Moldavian government can be pressured to stop their witchhunt. A campaign earlier in 1992 led to charges being dropped against two anarchists in Russia.

Popular Tribunal of Buyukan Sector, Moldavia, Kishinev-1 ul. M. Vistayazaul, d,2. President of Tribunal.

Ministry of Justice, Moldavia, Kishinev-12 ul. Stefan cheu Mare, d.73.

Parliament, Kishinev-1. ul. Stefan cheu Mare, d.105. Secretariat of Moldavian Parliament. Commission of Human Rights.

President of Moldavia, Kishinev-!pl. Velikogo Natsionalnogo Sobraniya, d.! Michar Ion Snegur.

Greece

THE ANARCHIST Group of Chania in Crete has published some extracts from a letter sent by an imprisoned militant, Vardis Tsouris. We reprint them here:

"They have imprisoned me, it must be two years now, because of my participation in a demonstration at Chania against the presence of the American Army, which constitutes a permanent war menace, particularly in that month of July 1990.

I was released thanks to the movement of support organised by the Chania Committee against the bases and dependence on the Americans. Today I'm back in prison. Why?

First of all for refusing to obey, because I refused the humiliation of presenting myself at the police station every month...an individual is free

or not free. I don't want a mutilated liberty: in prison for saying no to the state, I have kept my liberty; outside as submissive citizen, I would have lost it. Secondly, for prevention. The government, overwhelmed by the recent popular awakening, have seen strikes and demonstrations proliferate, including at Chania. They want to isolate the presumed inciters.

But people don't come out in the streets because of an individual but because of their social conditions, and finally for their right to justice, economic equality and freedom.

I express my solidarity with all those who are opposed to the class in power, to capital, to the multinationals and to Maastricht...as well as to those who could join this opposition, because if things are bad then they'll get worse".

Vardis Tsouris has not been judged and if he is refused bail will spend another 18 months in jail. He is at present on hunger strike.

Mass demonstration

The mass demonstration at Chania on 23-24 July 1990 against the American bases has not been forgotten by the rulers. And the moment chosen to gaol Vardis Tsouris coincided with a period of general strike massively supported by the working class in response to a huge price rise on many products, as well as a rise in the rate of national insurance, drastically effecting the cost of living of working people. All designed so that on the eve of Maastricht the Greek economy becomes Euro-compatible.

Los Angeles

DONALD COLEMAN has been the first of 8,000 people arrested after the Los Angeles riots to be sentenced.

He received 19 years and 8 months from Superior Judge Nancy Brown for chucking a molotov cocktail into a 7-11 store on the second night of rioting.

This vicious sentence is a sign of what will come for all those arrested for daring to express their rage at their conditions, racism and State brutality.

Italy: Workers against the Unions

ENORMOUS CHANGES and great unrest, hardly reported on by the British media, have swept through Italy. The example given by the Italian working class is not one that the British rulers want us to take to heart.

The fall of the Wall and the defeat of state capitalism in Eastern and Central Europe led to a change of circumstances in Italy. The old system that had existed since the end of the last World War ended. The **Christian Democrats** (DC) had stayed in power in conjunction with a number of allies whilst the **Italian Communist Party** (PCI) who could muster 30% of the vote remained as an 'opposition' in a 'historic compromise'.

The government forces lost the complete support of the USA which had helped keep them in power, whilst the PCI dropped its pretence at opposition, changed its name to **Democratic Party of the Left** (PDS) along with its structure, and became a pretender to government as a credible 'democratic force'. All this happened over the heads of a population, in particular the large number of workers who had been under the ideological sway of the PCI, and who were further alienated by the actions of the political class.

Scandal

This was further aggravated by scandal after scandal concerning the political parties, first of all the **Italian Socialist Party** (PSI), and then the DC and PDS. Party officials had funnelled money into their own bank accounts or for the benefit of their party. A section of the magistrature led a series of investigations into these scandals, revealing the depth of corruption within the Italian State. There is a strong likelihood that elements within the State with the participation of certain sections of the ruling class gave these judges free rein, to help in a formal change of power in line with a 'United Europe'. These investigations failed to reveal all the wheelings and dealings of the secret services, the State engineered massacres and 'politics of tension' of the '70s and '80s. This would be too much to ask.

Animosity

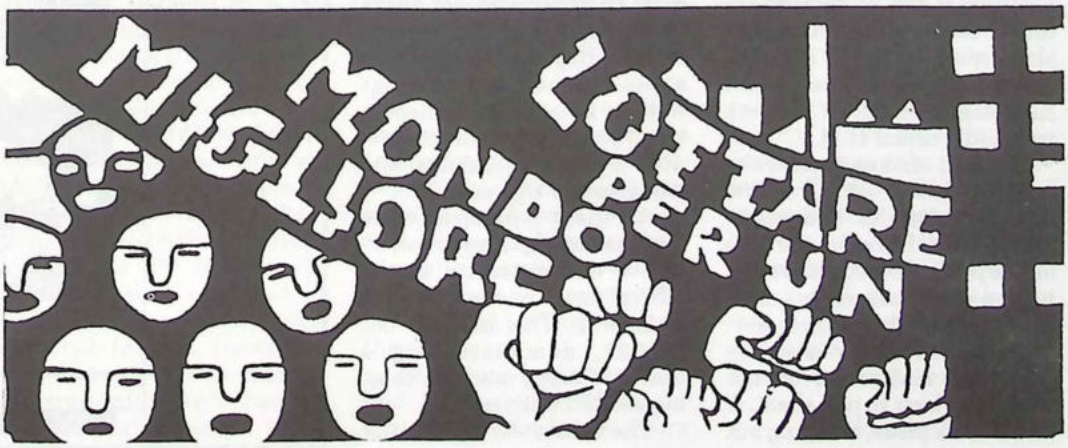
At the same time the **Leagues of the North** emerged. These were political organisations created several years ago, with a pseudo-federalist rhetoric, playing on the animosity between the 'productive' North and a 'parasitic' Centre and South. The Leagues increased their electoral support at the last elections in April, passing from one MP to 80, and have consolidated their support in the great industrial centres of the North like Milan, Brescia, Bergamo, etc.

After the April elections a new government was cobbled together with a small majority on an anti-League basis, led by the 'socialist' Amato. The clear aim of this government was the destruction of the 'historic compromise' that has been the basis of the post-war Italian State.

House of Cards

The Italian economy, much vaunted as the fourth or fifth healthiest in the world, had become a house of cards. Consumerism, encouraged up to the present, became for the government, a danger leading to inflation. Everyone now had to make sacrifices. In July the unions (CGIL, CSIL, UIL) signed an accord with the government and the employers agreeing a wage freeze and the abolition of the sliding scale of wages (which adjusted wages with any rise in inflation). Of course, the union membership had not been consulted. The unions had, obviously afraid of working class anger, signed the accord during the annual closure of the factories.

In September, the Amato government launched a series of measures attacking the working class. Amongst the most vicious was the freeze of pensions and a raising of the age of retirement, the housing tax extended to lodgers and tenants, the ending of health benefits for many working class people and a tax on bank savings, as well as a rise in costs of driving licences, passports and other official documents. The excuse for all these measures was a huge State budget deficit. These measures, it is estimated, would put an additional 500,000 below the poverty



line. In addition, rises in gas, electricity and rent were at the planning stage, as well as big cuts in social expenditure.

All the parties and unions supported the manoeuvres of the government, with the exception of **Rifondazione Communista** (a merger of those who had rejected the change of direction of the PCI with the Leftist group **Democrazia Proletaria**) and the Greens in parliament.

Outburst

To the great surprise of many, the token demonstrations called by the unions in mid-September turned into a huge outburst of working class anger. In Florence, Turin, Milan, Naples and above all Rome, the rallies were interrupted by slogan-chanting, whistling and the throwing of eggs and rotten tomatoes. The police had to be called in to protect the union bureaucrats behind riot shields! The union stewards waded into the crowd savagely beating workers and students with clubs. The media explained the events by saying that several dozen provocateurs, autonomists, anarchists and ex-terrorists had sabotaged the 'peaceful and democratic' demonstrations. In reality, newsreels revealed the mass nature of the discontent and the indiscriminate charges of the police in collaboration with the union stewards. In the workplaces the discontent was shown with 25% of workers not renewing their union membership this year. In Milan factory workers marched to the rail station, calling on the railway workers for support and blockaded the rails. Other blockades of rail and road took place in other areas. In Naples a crowd of factory workers stormed a meeting of the metalworkers union leadership. In terror, the union called a general strike in the area that night. In Milan a hundred workers wrecked a union H.Q.

Wildcat strikes then broke out in places like Venice, Florence, Ancona and above all at Genoa. Here the workers on the public transport system held a mass assembly, marched to meet the council workers, where another assembly was held, and called on the postal workers to join them. A march took place, bringing out large numbers of factory workers and sailors.

Sabotage

The unions attempted to limit the independent action of the workers by calling general strikes, but limiting them to regions. In Genoa they sabotaged the mass movement there by calling their own mass assembly and persuading workers to only strike for a day.

In response to the union manoeuvres, a number of organisations developed. Inside the CGIL union, a left emerged called **Essere Sindicato** (To Be Unionised). This was backed by Rifondazione Communista and represented an attempt to keep the struggle within the unions. The **CUB** (United Rank and File Confederation) was created outside the unions, rallying several thousand workers, above all among metalworkers. The **COBAS** (rank and file committees created in the 1986-7 wave of struggle), strong in the public sector, appear to be establishing links with CUB. Outside of these structures are the **RDB** (Rank and File Representatives) who appear to be federating, as well as structures created in the '70s, factory councils created by the anarchists and **Autonomia Operaia.**

All these structures came together to organise an alternative demonstration to the official union one in Rome on October 2. This brought out 30,000, demonstrating a desire of many workers to go beyond the unions.

The unions were able to use the tactic of 'saving democracy' with a temporary abating of working class anger, to divert attention from the government attacks and complicity by the unions. The relative weakness of the new forces of struggle allowed the unions to exploit the debates in the workplaces.

Block

In particular the neo-communists of Rifondazione Communista with their leftist allies can hope on increasing beyond the 18% support given to their union bloc, Essere Sindicato. Like it or not, they have a substantial number of workers under their ideological sway and can be counted on to block any future radicalisation of struggle. The strike of October 13 only lasted four hours and the unions were able to control events in the street, with the help of the neo-communists and the aid of the police.

What has been vitally important has been the mobilisation of large numbers of workers, organising outside the unions and on the streets, and the direct confrontation with the union bureaucrats. The independent structures increased their influence considerably in several weeks in September-October. Even Essere Sindicato will face problems in the future. Its bureaucrats hope for a few extra posts in the union leadership (but the established bureaucrats may put a stop to this if things calm down!).

On the other hand those workers supporting it have other expectations. Whatever happens, we can expect further momentous struggles in Italy, which can hopefully spread further afield and can inspire us all.

ACTIVE RESISTANCE

OUT NOW! Active Resistance, the ACF paper for young people. 40p a copy plus postage. Articles on Raves, Ecology, Animal Rights etc. etc.

Minnie the Minx: *"I couldn't put it down."*

Dennis the Menace: *"I read it from cover to cover."*

Gnasher: *"Grrr! Woof! Gnash!"*

Enquiries to London address, for details, bulk orders.

Uprising in the Land of the Rising Sun

WORKERS RIOTING ON the streets is not an image generally associated with Japan but that's just what happened last October in Osaka, Japan's second largest city. When unemployed day labourers, living on a day to day, hand-to-mouth basis had their emergency payments stopped almost 1,000 of them angrily took to the streets, constructing burning barricades and fighting 1,500 riot police for three consecutive nights.

To understand how this could happen in the mythical land of the happy worker we need to look beyond the image and at the history of Japanese capitalism's development of the past 120 years since the 1868 'revolution'.

Modern capitalist Japan has its origins in the revolution which saw the victory, after a civil war, of the lower Samurai class under the restored Emperor Maiji. The desire of this class was the creation of a secure Japan, using military might, and the development of a capacity to engage in imperialist adventures abroad. They realised that Japan's feudalistic system had to make way for Western-style emergent capitalism. In 1871 they formally 'abolished' feudalism and were on their way to developing a powerful economy based upon heavy industry.

Industrialisation

The Japanese State was, therefore, instrumental in advancing capitalism in a very direct fashion. Engaging in a massive industrialisation programme, setting enterprises up and then selling them off at knock-down prices to budding capitalists to run! It was a tradition very different to either the state capitalism of say, the Soviet Union or the nationalisation of industry in Britain.

Japanese capitalism soon took off and quickly a 'dual economy' developed with the emergence of a light industry sector, mainly textile producing and considerably less state-aided.

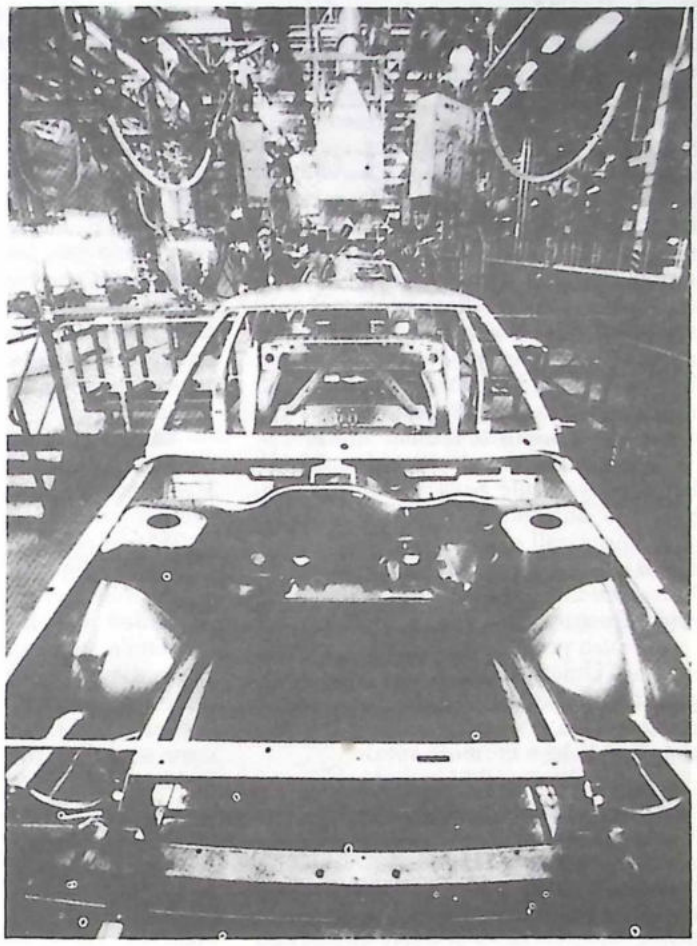
Employing mainly women workers it paid lower wages for longer hours in generally worse conditions than in the male-dominated heavy industry sector. This dual economy/dual workforce divide is still fundamental to Japanese bosses, but with some important differences.

Zaibatsu

The 1930s saw the development of the massive **Zaibatsu** companies, which dominate Japanese capitalism today. These giant corporate bodies were quick to embrace Taylorist management and production methods (not unlike the Bolsheviks in the USSR) and, hand in hand with the increasingly militarist and fascist State, mercilessly crushed attempts at workers' organisations.

The anarchist contribution to working class resistance at this time came in the form of the anarchist-communist **Black Youth League** and the **All-Japan Libertarian Federation of Labour Unions** (really more a specific anarchist-communist organisation than a union body) as well as the syndicalist minority union, the **Japanese Libertarian United Conference of Labour Unions**. There were, at their peak, more than 20,000 active anarchists in Japan. These groupings engaged in a ferocious struggle with Japan's bosses and State until their eventual suppression in 1937.

Despite Japan's defeat in the Second World War the Zaibatsu came out intact and actually having made a profit! However the de-industrialisation of Japan by the victorious allies led to 50% of the working population employed in more or less permanent agricultural labour. However, once the reins of economic self-determination were handed back to the Japanese bourgeoisie the State intervened strongly with a programme of re-industrialisation whilst also launching a phenomenal export drive.



Sub-class

The division of the working class continued with the creation of a 'sub class' of what could be described as semi-unemployed alongside what some have misleadingly labelled a labour aristocracy. The 'semi-unemployed' consists of workers employed on a temporary, seasonal or day labour basis, by the Zaibatsu giants (like Toyota, Mitsubishu, Nissan etc) and workers in small firms which are themselves often subcontractors, subsidiaries or suppliers of the giants.

These latter workers often find themselves working for lower wages, for longer hours and in worse conditions than those privileged to sweat for Zaibatsu.

But what of the permanent Zaibatsu workers (who incidentally make up only 30% of the Japanese workforce)? Do they really fit the image of the happy company-loyal employees as portrayed in the West?

Zaibatsu are certainly loyal; there is little alternative when your wages are paid according to time served rather than skill. Put simply, loyalty tends to exist when workers can only raise their level of income by staying with the firm! Satashi Kamata's *Japan in the Passing Lane: An Insider's Account of Life in a Japanese Auto-Factory* is well worth a read. His descriptions of seemingly ever-increasing workloads on

Continued on page 13

DEBATE

WHAT SHOULD WE DO

WE ARE OPENING THE pages of *Organise!* to a debate on the unions. Included are the text of a leaflet handed out at a recent Socialist Movement conference on the unions, a letter sharply attacking the leaflet, a letter from a DAM member in reply to the article in *Organise!* 27 on the unions and an editorial reply.

Text of ACF (London) leaflet

CONSTANT government-employer attacks on workers' rights and conditions coupled with the illegalisation of any useful workers' actions have been met with total compliance by the unions. It has always been so, to one degree or another, but now, all union strategies are based on the acceptance of total defeat.

Some proposals to counter this are:

"Elect a left-wing leadership...the Labour Party should back the unions...Repeal the anti-union laws...TUC get off your knees, call a general strike..! Create broad left campaigns in order to get broad left candidates into positions of power and influence..."

All such proposals are simply a waste of time. Unions have always been compliant with the ruling class. Today, their collaboration is overt. In previous years they had to be a bit more subtle.

Starting point

If you want social justice for the working class of the world, a general starting point is anti-capitalism. Unions have never been anti-capitalist (although many union members are). The job of the union is to alleviate the sufferings of workers within the present system. This has developed into things like legal help, pension funds, various deals with management over wages, hours and conditions. Sometimes the union may even call for a strike in defence of all the workers, but only if workers are really pushy in their demands. All these are not in themselves 'bad' aims. But it stands to reason, that to truly serve the cause of the workers, this requires total and ceaseless hostility to the system based on the naked exploitation of our labour.

Trade unions have tried to have it both ways. In the past they may not have 'liked' capitalism very much (today they are staunch supporters of it) but at the same time they knew that they had to be legally recognised by the bosses. It is this legality which has been the kiss of death to any revolutionary movement. At the same time legality has allowed the growth (and now decline) of a reformist workers' movement.

Unions love the law, they will bend over backwards to ensure their members obey it. Increased anti-union laws, sequestration, etc, haven't led unions to love it any less, let alone break the law. The unions' response to such attacks is to protest without action and vainly hope that some day, Labour will get elected and repeal those 'bad' laws — ironic really as trade unions were originally born out of illegality.

Added to this, we have the unions' traditional link with the Labour Party. Historically, Labour has always been for 'worker friendly' capitalism.

This, of course, is a contradiction. Labour governments have also suppressed strikes (on occasion even using troops), defended the Empire against independence movements, brought in the Prevention of Terrorism Act, attempted wage freezes and have been responsible for the Social Contract and the 5% wage norm as well as the introduction of monetarism. This was when the Labour Party still talked about 'socialism'. Now they have dropped all such pretences.

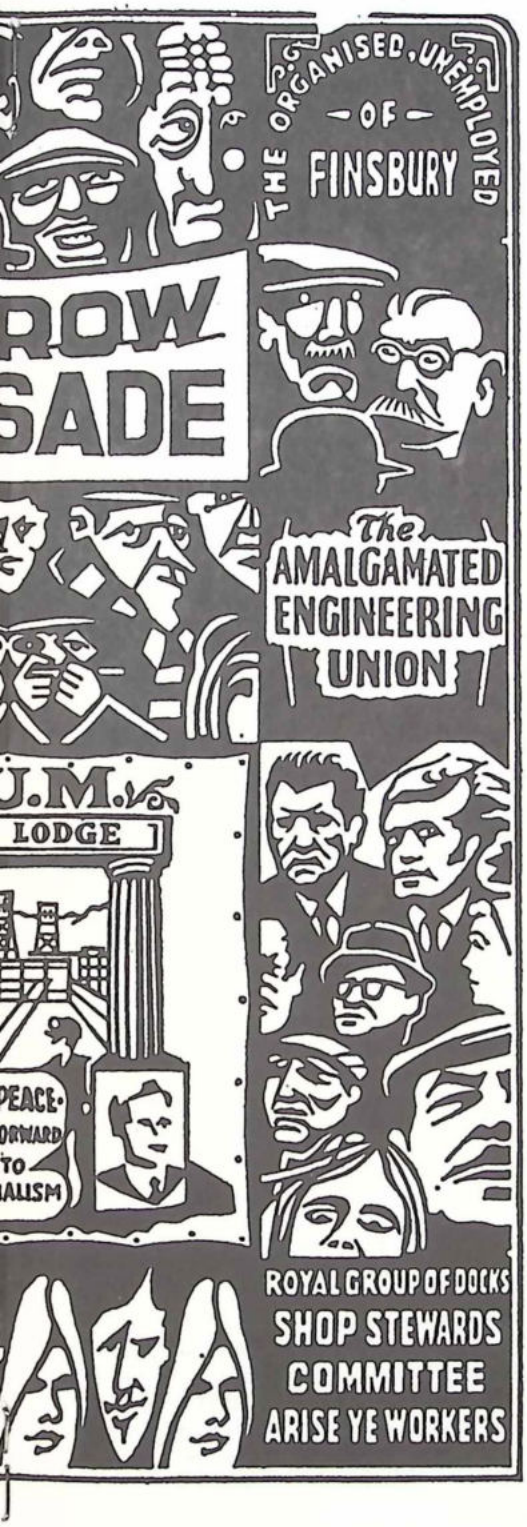
But what about the social gains brought about by the unions and the Labour Party? Yes there have, in the past, been real gains. But how did these come about? Nothing has ever been given freely by governments, workers have had to fight for it. And though reformers have claimed the credit for them, in reality all social gains have been won by strikes, occupations, sabotage and riots by militant sections of the working class. In short, by direct action (something Labour and the unions are totally opposed to) and workers' solidarity.

We don't need to tell you that Labour and the union bureaucrats have always been against such struggles. Indeed, anyone who's ever been involved in a dispute knows only too well that half the battle is actually against the union and its attempts to control or water-down our struggle.

Left-wing leadership

"We need left-wing leadership". The history of the labour movement is littered with sincere socialists who, once in power, have turned out to be just as bad, or worse, than the rightists. Those who have tried not to compromise their ideals have achieved nothing for the workers. One-time leftists are accused of 'selling-out', but in truth, can it really be any other way? After all, what has a union leader got in common with a shop floor worker? To the worker, the union bureaucrat is pretty indistinguishable from the boss. In fact, many union leaders see themselves as being part of the same clique as the bosses. For workers, any meaningful change can only come from below. Real workers power lies in our own hands.

ABOUT THE UNIONS?



A way forward

One positive step would be the creation of a strong rank and file movement. In the past, such movements tended to put pressure on union leaders, 'democratise' the unions, create left-wing unions or have been vehicles for getting rank and file workers into positions of power. Such tactics have always led to stagnation and betrayal.

The best rank and file movement is one which acts as a workers' solidarity movement, a reservoir of strength and support for those in struggle. It needs to be a movement of the base, with union officials actively barred from involvement. Above all it must be combative, unafraid of the law and should base its tactics on direct action. As a movement it should be independent of all parties, its allegiance being to the working class only. Such a movement is long overdue.

Yet rank and file movements are not necessarily revolutionary or anti-capitalist. Revolutionary workers need to build groups and networks both in their workplaces and across industries. Such groups should work across union boundaries also. Such groups should aim to spread revolutionary ideas among rank and file workers and should also try to oppose reformist trends in rank and file organisations. (e.g. illusions in union leaders and political parties). Such groups should be overtly anti-capitalist, anti-trade union, and hostile to all political parties. They need to be autonomous by nature, not controlled from outside but directly by their members. They should urge maximum resistance to the boss class and seek abolition of the capitalist system and the creation of a society based not on profit but on meeting human needs.

And the Unions?

Unions have always been defensive. Today, they don't even do this. They need to be replaced by a workers' movement that is not defensive but actively goes on the attack and has as its ultimate goal, the total transformation of society.

Letter in reply from Dave Douglass

DEAR COMRADES,

Just a line to say how utterly bad /inaccurate/counter-revolutionary your *What's to be Done about the Unions?* leaflet is.

Actually describing yourself as anti-trade union certainly puts you in the same camp as the Tories and big business.

To be anti-union is simply anti-working class in this and many other necks of the woods.

You could have no credibility among workers, in any workplace I know with an anti-union position.

In fact you'd just be regarded as a strike breaker, a scab or a 'non' which is a scab waiting to happen.

Look around you — 100,000 workers on strike at one time — all at one time — unions are combat organisations, albeit often deformed, betrayed or distorted by bureaucracy but it is within unions that people at work first take up the cudgels with the boss.

I refer you to my extended examples of this in the current edition of *The Heavy Stuff*, 'Charge of the Left Brigade'.

I'm afraid comrades, your enthusiasm to be radical and 'agin it all' has carried you over the class line at least as far as this pathetic leaflet is concerned.

I suggest you urgently and thoroughly rethink your position:

a) Where is the Class?
b) How does it fight when it fights?
c) Where do we stand while that fight is ongoing?

Obviously you believe the answer to c) is outside telling the workers how "you've got it all wrong again".

We are such simpletons.

Revolutionary greetings,

Dave Douglass
National Union of Mineworkers
Bloody Proud of It.

EDITORIAL REPLY: Hardly surprising to receive such a letter from you, Dave. In anarchist circles you put yourself over as the fine flower of the working class, a down-to-earth rank and file worker. When in fact you are heavily implicated in the NUM structure as a full-time official (vice-chair of South Yorkshire NUM panel) and have your own column in the *Daily Worker*, newspaper of the fiercely vanguardist **Communist Party of Great Britain**. Here you talk about the "self-serving slogans" of various Trotskyist groups which keep them on the fringes of most workers' perceptions. Perhaps you should tell this to the CPGB. Isn't being a full-time union official and a supporter of a Leninist organisation in contradiction to being a member of Class War?

Anyway to get to the point. First the hysterical and abusive language you employ. To call someone a scab or strike-breaker is a very serious charge. No one in the ACF has ever been guilty of this. We have enthusiastically supported all workplace struggles.

Many of us did active solidarity work in the last Miners' Strike, some of us in the previous two. We also actively worked in solidarity action for P&O and Silent Night strikers, the Wapping Printworkers, the list is long. This does not mean

that we ever supported the union bureaucrats.

Sabotage

No, you're wrong. Many workers are on different levels aware that the unions are incapable of defending their interests. The history of class struggle in the car factories points to this.

Just look at the declining membership of the unions. Workers aren't leaving or failing to join the unions because they lack class consciousness. They see clearly that it is a waste of time and money joining an organisation that does not defend their interests.

On the underground, on the rail, in the docks, the unions have worked consistently to sabotage any action by workers organising themselves. In the recent wave of strikes in Greece and Germany, the unions successfully stymied independent workers action.

In Italy (see elsewhere in this issue) the working class moved outside and against the unions. In the next wave of class struggle throughout the world, workers will increasingly move outside the unions, creating new forms of organisation.

This will be the reality. Those people still in love with the unions will either have to re-think, or be a barrier to any advances in the war with the bosses.

(Thanks to 'Trotwatch' for info on Dave Douglass)

Reply to 'Unions' article

DEAR COMRADES,

I was very interested to read the article in *Organise!* No. 27 on 'Organising in the Workplace'. It is good to see that you are trying to confront this issue which is of vital importance. I write as a member of the Public service workers' network, a body recently set up by members and ex-members of DAM.

Unfortunately, there are a number of errors in your article which give it a narrow sectarian tone. You really should ditch this council communist dogma about all unions necessarily ending in a mess of hierarchy and sell-outs regardless of how they are structured, composed, or politically oriented. Leave this kind of ultra leftist posturing to the likes of the ICC and Subversion. In my view, at this point in history the working class has a wealth of historical experience to draw on and should be able to avoid many of the mistakes of the past in the organisations it builds. Also, as the ACF-model 'networks' will not actually dirty their hands with real struggle (as this would presumably be reformist) they will remain purely propaganda networks — little more than workplace branches of the ACF. You don't have to have cosy 'beer and sandwiches business meetings' to win concessions off the bosses — look at all the 'unofficial' disputes that have won gains!

The alternative we put forward is to build networks which whilst starting out like yours as propaganda networks, aim to become fighting organisations, tools in the class struggle. These will be shaped by the needs of the workers on the ground, but will be informed by the history and practice of anarchism/anarcho-syndicalism. It seems stupid for all three libertarian left organisations in Britain to support separate industrial networks in a sectarian way. (What would Makhno have said!) An Anarcho syndicalist union is a long way off — so why does the ACF erect this as a barrier against working in cooperation with anarcho syndicalists seeking to build industrial networks?

We would like to believe that you would not put the ideological purity of your organisation before the interests of the class.

We would like to see members and non-members of DAM, ACF and CWF working together on the task of building industrial networks and a culture of resistance in the workplace.

in the spirit of comradely criticism
Paul F. PSWN/DAM (S.Yorks)

EDITORIAL REPLY: Thanks for your constructive letter, Paul. Perhaps our article on workplace organisation was not clear enough. We were not arguing against fighting for immediate needs, in terms of pay and conditions. We agree with you that 'unofficial' disputes have won gains. Of course we want to be involved in 'real struggle'.

Although we think that anarcho-syndicalism had its faults and has been transcended, we agree there is much to learn from it. However, we take issue with your statement that unions need not necessarily end in a "mess of hierarchy and sell-outs, regardless of how they are structured, composed, or politically oriented". Only workplace groups and networks can advance independent working class struggle. Unions, however they are structured, always end up negotiating away workers' interests. Workplace organisation cannot be based on a union, even if it is anarcho-syndicalist or even assemblyist. Effective organisation has to go beyond the particular factory/industry; it must draw in workers in all workplaces in the area, and go beyond the workplace into the neighbourhood/locality. Yes, the struggle at the point of production is vitally important, but an effective struggle must break down the false barriers in life under capitalism, between workplace and 'community'. In their pamphlet on unions Wildcat point out that territorially based struggles have the greatest subversive potential. This was well-illustrated by the anti-poll tax movement. This is one reason we call ourselves anarchist communists, because we want to destroy the artificial barriers between struggle in the workplace and the neighbourhood.

As regards cooperation in one united network. This is something that the ACF will have to discuss nationally before we can give you an answer. Obviously we are in favour of the unity of revolutionaries. However one obstacle would be disagreements over whether or when an anarcho-syndicalist union could be set up. Such differences led to the breakup of the Communication Worker group in the postal depots. A point would come when DAM members would be arguing for the establishment of an anarcho-syndicalist union. The question arises as to how much joint work, and on what level, anarchist communists and anarcho-syndicalists can cooperate in the short and medium term.

We hope to continue with this debate in future. Next issue we review two pamphlets: Dave Douglass' pamphlet on the unions and Wildcat's reply to it.

The Death of the AWG

The Anarchist Workers Group was set up in June 1988. Their expressed aim was to build a "libertarian communist organisation that can — for the first time in this country — put it truly where it belongs: centre stage in the arena of class struggle.." Four years later the AWG has dissolved itself and most of its members have retreated into private life, with two or three gravitating to a Leninist magazine Analysis. Organise! *takes a look at the politics of the AWG and why it collapsed.*

THE AWG LEFT the anarcho-syndicalist organisation, the Direct Action Movement, because they disagreed over building syndicalist unions in Britain. They criticised this strategy as being divorced from reality and added, looking at the example of Spain during the Civil War there, that a "revolutionary union does not guarantee a revolution". ACF members would agree with them on this point, and indeed the DAM's attempt to construct a syndicalist union, the Dispatch Industry Workers' Union, collapsed in mid-1992 in apathy.

The AWG went on to produce four issues of a magazine *Socialism from Below*. In the first issue there was a major article on 'Anarchism in the Thatcher Years'. Most of the analysis of British anarchism was correct enough, and the ACF would agree with it. They stated that British anarchism had been divorced from class struggle, and that for years anarchists had been content to live 'outside' of society, and was seen as a 'counter-cultural' rebellion at society's fringes rather than a dynamic force.

Watershed

They quite rightly saw the Miners' Strike of 1984-5 as a watershed in recent British anarchist history. Many activists began to "rediscover the class roots of anarchism and realise how far the movement had strayed from them. From the Miners' Strike and through to the end of the printers' dispute at Wapping many were forced... to make the break and embrace the class struggle".

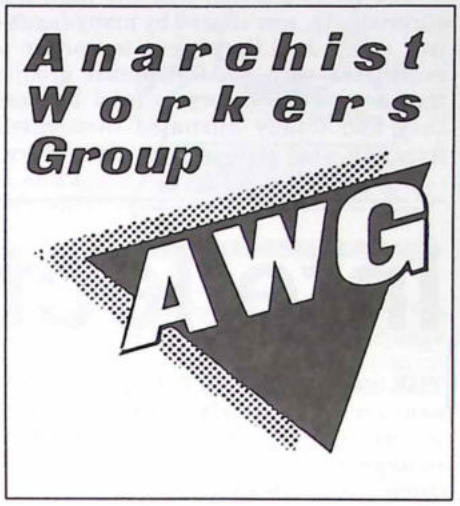
The AWG also, with reason, pointed to the lack of politics in anarchist support for the miners' strike. There was a refusal to criticise Scargill and the NUM leadership, activity being reduced to unquestioning support of the NUM.

However, the general analysis went on to consider specific Anarchist organisations, and here the tone was extremely patronising, particularly as the AWG owed its existence to political developments that had taken place in DAM, the ACF and Class War, before the AWG had even existed. When they analysed ACF politics they showed little interest in a real examination. Their analysis was more of a dismissal, accusing us of ultra-leftism, without adequately explaining what they meant by this term.

Indeed the politics that the AWG developed was partly shared by the ACF, in terms of the need for class struggle politics, and theoretical and tactical unity. However they did not share similar positions on the unions, on nationalism, and as time passed their concept of organisation began to evolve. The ACF, long before its discovery by future AWG members, had taken a look at the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, a document produced in 1926 by Makhno, Arshinov and other Russian anarchists, that persuasively argued for a strong national anarchist organisation based on tactical and ideological unity. However, we saw faults in the *Platform*. It is one of the most important statements by revolutionary anarchists, but it contains certain errors and has been superseded by, for example, the *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* (An ACF pamphlet, available from national address). The AWG however treated the *Platform* as if it was a biblical text, to be worshipped without question. The Platform group learnt a lot from the defeat of anarchism during the Russian revolution, but they were to some extent in awe of the centralised efficiency of the Bolshevik victors.

Leadership of Ideas

The AWG came to many of the same conclusions as the ACF in their article on organisation in No.2 of their journal. They took on board the idea of 'leadership of ideas' developed inside the **Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists** in the '70s and continued within the ACF. This idea calls for anarchism to become the leading concept of the revolution. This leadership is purely at the level of ideas and should not be confused with the political monopolisation of struggle advanced by Leninist vanguard parties. Like the ACF, the AWG recognised the contradiction between a politically advanced minority and the rest of the working class, and therefore of the danger of substituting the will of the minority for that of the whole class. Unlike the ACF however, it failed to realise that the best way to avoid these pitfalls was by as actively as possible empowering the class as a whole, by advocating the most libertarian forms of organisation and struggle (see our pamphlet *The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation* for a discussion of these problems). Instead they argued for a 'cadre organisation' of trained revolutionaries, skilled in public speaking, writing articles and leaflets etc. Now, the ACF would not deny that anarchist communist militants should develop these skills and that indeed a revolutionary organisation should help this come about. But the AWG actively froze the relation between the anarchist militant and the mass of the population by using concepts derived from Leninism, themselves derived from French military theory; the cadre as a permanent officer class ready to control the conscript mass. They did not talk half enough about the need to help the majority of the class to develop liberating skills. Indeed the AWG 'cadre' meant to withstand the harsh political climate was unable to survive more than four years.



Finally, on the question of national liberation the AWG steered a path that smashed them on the reefs. With the Gulf War the AWG stated in *Socialism from Below* 3 that it stood "alone on the libertarian left for concentrating our fire on Western imperialism. Most anarchist groups, inspired by either pacifist or left communist ideas, have refused to take sides and instead raised the slogan *'No War But the Class War!'*... ". The AWG stated that this position (one adopted by the ACF) was "appropriate for an inter-imperialist conflict such as the First World War, but when applied to a conflict between the leading imperialist powers on the one hand and a bankrupt, debt-ridden Third World nation on the other, this position has reactionary implications.. The 'plague on both your houses' approach is based on an assessment that there is no essential difference between Iraq and the US-led imperialist forces". Now, this argument implied that Saddam was less of a threat to the working class than the Western powers. As we said at the time, "In the global league table of capitalist states, certain countries and alliances will always be stronger and more influential in particular periods than others...it is impossible to offer 'political support' to Hussein's force *without* also supporting the attacks on the Iraqi

working class that must accompany the switch to a war footing".

Leninists

The AWG position was one that, not surprisingly, was shared by many Leninists, and indeed they began to work in a committee with small Leninist groups that argued for victory to Iraq. By now they had totally alienated themselves from the class struggle anarchist movement, despite some attempts at back-pedalling in the last issue of their mag. Demoralised and unable to grow they wasted away.

The AWG experience is one that should be looked at in finding out what not to do in developing anarchist communist theory. With the collapse of Stalinism, a new period has opened, with the reemergence of anarchist communism. However anarchist communism is still a weak current, and is still prone to the influences of on one hand Leninism (the examples of the AWG and the **Anarchist Workers Association/Libertarian Communist Group** in the '70s) and on the other hand the ivory tower irrelevance of the left communist milieu. The AWG sincerely hoped to make class struggle anarchism relevant, but failed to withstand the influences of Leninism. Those ex-AWGers and those influenced by AWG politics should seriously consider the lessons of the AWG collapse.

Intellectualism

THE 20th CENTURY has been the century of the intellectual — and nowhere more so than in the field of bourgeois politics. Intellectuals produced the two most horrendous totalitarian regimes of this century. The writings and sayings of dictators like Lenin and Hitler weren't a purely incidental part of their political careers. Such intellectual activities were key instruments in their rise to power, just as military prowess was the key to Napolean's. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Lenin's *Imperialism*, (amongst other writings) were what put them on the map. The quality of their writings, in terms of logic and evidence, may have been patchy. But these were masterpieces of propaganda, texts for frustrated like-minded egotists to grab hold of to make into a political agenda of their own.

Marxist-Leninist tracts like *Imperialism* gave dramatic, bitter and black and white explanations of capitalism's world practice. There was a vividly pictured world vision of international arch-villains versus Lenin's own followers as heroic agents of destiny. Knowledge of this text meant the reader could find within it the master keys to history, without the drudgery of having to cope with the complexities of reality.

Likewise, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* created another world vision, peopled by whole races assigned their disparate roles in the grand, megalomaniac scheme of history, and made titans or devils according to one man's imagination. Drivel? Yes. Effective? Also yes.

Revelation

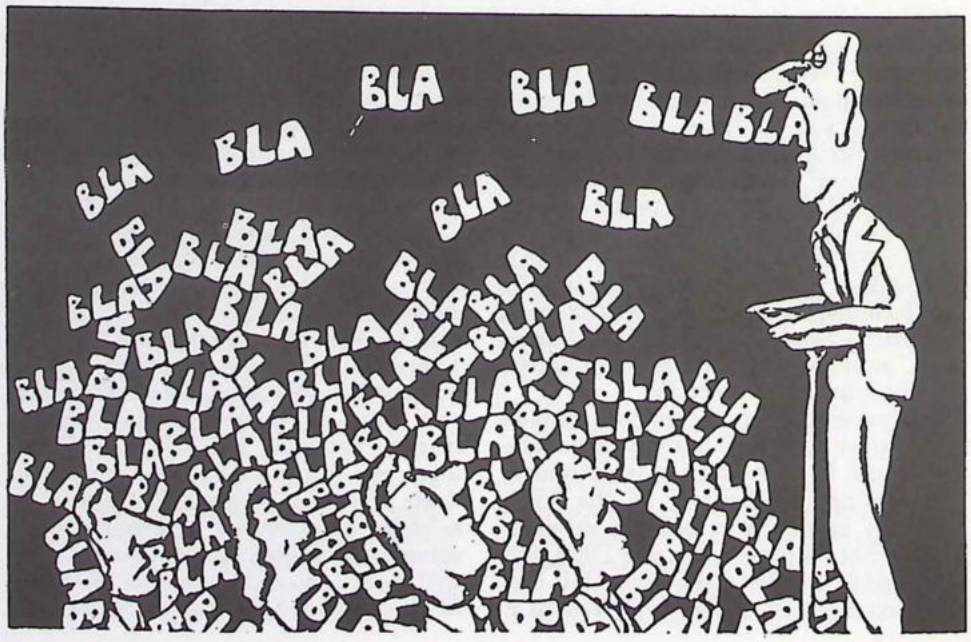
Fascism and the so-called 'communism' of the Bolsheviks, both totalitarian systems, traced their genesis to an intellectual phenomenon. They appealed to the same prejudices and susceptibilities of intellectuals as other crusades and movements that have seized the imagination of the educated and the articulate — the so-called 'thinking people'. These movements have in common a sense of a revelation grasped only by the anointed, but a revelation that needs to be imposed on the benighted masses for their own good. Could anything be more of an ego trip, or more in keeping with the intellectuals' exalted view of themselves, or their resentment at seeing power in the hands of lesser beings?

To a certain extent it can be understood that working class people sucked into this maelstrom of bourgeois struggle were there through genuine conviction, a conviction that unfortunately cedes control over to social minorities, but nevertheless is burning with ardent desire to trash the capitalist system. Among the amazing stories of this century are the pilgrimages of intellectuals to the lands of the dictators, only to come back to gush over the 'progress' of tyrannies whose subjects were making desperate escapes whenever they could. When the facts of massacre and abuse were too blatant too deny, the explanation was that these were the 'growing pains' of a new society or 'local excesses', and we were reminded that "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs". Much later the evidence was for all the world to see, that, yes, in the Ukraine the famine which killed millions had been deliberately engineered. This didn't matter to the intellectuals, eggs were broken and that was that. The fatal talent of the intelligentsia is facility with words — and a blindness to the fact that reality is not so malleable as language.

Anarchist-communists have no argument with the pursuit of knowledge. Intellectual pursuits, argument, philosophising, all these activities have their place in society.

But in the absence of a society which encourages in each individual that individual's full potential, we have to be on guard against privileged minorities who build political structures and weave sophistries upon the bedrock of specialised knowledge and elitism. There is no shortcut to the revolutionary solution, better that we make mistakes and learn from experience, rather than be taken in by any offers by intellectuals.

Whether those intellectuals be academics philosophising or pseudo-Marxist Trotskyists attempting to revitalise the creeds of Leninism, this much is certain. The past is irrevocable, but many of the factors behind its tragedies are still at work in the present, and a danger to the future. The issues change — but the dogmatism and the ego behind the dogmatism are the same.



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UPRISING IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

Continued from page 7

a never-ceasing track transforming workers into assembling automatons brilliantly explodes the myth of the 'happy worker' in Japan.

Much has been made, in recent years, of the introduction of 'Japanese' techniques of management into the West (read exploitation). These techniques, so beloved of some British bosses, have ever-increasing productivity as their objective, use Taylorist, Fordist and Human Relations schools and have proved highly successful. Also important has been the role of the trade unions in Japan. Their total integration into capitalism is considerably more obvious even than in Britain where the unions at least have some appearance of independence from management.

Closed Shop

Before World War Two few Japanese workers were unionised. Many who were belonged to militant syndicalist unions (like those mentioned above) which were crushed in the general political reaction leading up to war. Japanese unionism re-emerged after the War and rapidly fell in with the ruling classes' programme of industrial reconstruction. Today one of the striking features of the trade unions is their operation in a closed shop environment encouraged (where it is not enforced) by the management of the Zaibatsu. The infamous company unions organise only Zaibatsu workers and indeed only 29% (1989) of that sector's employees. There have been few attempts at unionising the 'semi-unemployed' day labourers and small firm workers. Zaibatsu unions are viewed, rightly, by most workers as simply a part of management and a rubber-stamp for the bosses designs.

A particular area of discontent in Zaibatsu companies is around the extremely long hours. On average the Japanese worker slaves between 200 and 500 hours per year longer than their 'Western' counterpart. Less than 20% of full-time workers get two-day weekends. The truth is that Japan's relative economic health is reliant upon ultra-exploitation. But the world recession has also seen Japanese capitalism expand its industrial base to its Asian neighbours, such as South Korea and Malaysia, and even 'Communist' China, where lower wages and poorer working conditions are enforceable. Wherever workers manage better wages and conditions companies have moved to more exploitable areas.

The day-labourers in Japan itself have tended to bear the brunt of the recession, however, and it is these workers, many from the Burakumin (hamlet people) caste, who suffer minority discrimination and who are the most potentially combative of the Japanese working class. In the face of vicious exploitation they have developed a strong sense of community solidarity and a spirit of comradeship that is often lacking in the full-time Zaibatsu workers. Alongside the 'colonised' workforces this super-exploited layer of the Japanese proletariat may prove to be the catalyst for mass social struggle in the Far East.

REVIEWS

What is Anarchism? An Introduction. Freedom Press. £1.95. 74pp.

This pamphlet consists of an introductory three chapters from Donald Rouum, the Wildcat strip cartoonist, and a number of excerpts from anarchist writings, mainly from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Some of these excerpts, particularly those from the well-known international activists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta are well-argued exposés of revolutionary anarchism, based on reason and common sense. However, some of the later texts leave much to be desired. Take for example the text, 'The Relevance of Anarchism' by Bill Christopher, Jack Robinson, Philip Sansom and Peter Turner. They state that the heart of anarchism is "its opposition to government". Right, as far as it goes. But the historic anarchist movement grew from the development of working class organisation from the late 1860s on, and was a result of opposition to capitalism. It was and is, anti-state and anti-capitalist. To leave this vital ingredient out is to reduce anarchism to a vague humanist, liberal, individualist response to hierarchical society.

To compound this error, they go on to discuss the one big happy family of anarchism. "...Each anarchist will make his own moves and if we respect each other we will respect our own comrade's scale of priorities". So anarcho-syndicalists, individualists etc are meant to tolerate each other and co-exist in the same 'movement'. Any idea of collective decision-making and collective responsibility goes out of the window.

Similarly, in the section by Donald Rouum, various currents are described as anarchist. "There are anarchists who believe that wars and war preparations, penury, intolerance, oppression and other features of government are permanent features of society, and that therefore the only role for anarchists is permanent protest." He goes on to describe another 'current', those who believe that "the overall trend of social change has been in the direction of wider individual choices". What he is describing in the first place is a form of liberalism where if the wheels of democracy are oiled enough then capitalism can be tolerated. In the second place he is describing another form of liberalism where everything is getting better bit by bit. Neither of these ways of thinking have anything to do with revolutionary anarchism. And in fact there are very few now who call themselves anarchists either here or elsewhere in the world, who subscribe to these views.

The 'Movement'

Donald Rouum repeats this elsewhere in the book where he states that few anarchists are in the formally structured organisations. Now, the 'movement' has evolved over the last 15 years, to the point where British anarchism is re-affirming its class struggle base, and where most anarchist activists are in one of the national organisations. In fact what Donald Rouum describes as the movement in this country bears more resemblance to that of the '60s than to the '90s.

The end result of the pamphlet, despite some excellent excerpts from anarchist thinkers, is an impression of a confused and contradictory mish-mash of opposing ideas and currents all within one big happy family. This has been the political morass from which the ACF and other class struggle anarchists in this country have pulled themselves out. As such, the pamphlet will not go very far in answering the interested individual's question of 'What is Anarchism?'.

REVIEWS

A Short History of Political Violence In Britain. Martyn Everett. 60p. 16 pages. Available from ACF London.

Our comrade Martyn states at the beginning of this absorbing little pamphlet that, "My purpose in writing this short history is to demonstrate that political violence is a tradition in Britain. It is a tradition of the British state, the British ruling class, and the institutional pillars of British society".

In this pamphlet he focusses on the use of physical violence as a weapon of state, excluding all out war, and in most cases the repression after major insurrections. As Martyn points out, the State has never been slow to resort to political violence to protect its interests, privilege and power. State violence from the time of the establishment of the Norman ruling class through the Peasants Revolt right up to the Great Miners' Strike and the Great Poll Tax Riot are documented. A grim account it is too.

As Martyn concludes, "The political representatives of the armed state, with their privileged access to mass-circulation newspapers, and nationally broadcast electronic media, are ready to denounce some kinds of violence at the drop of a hat. What they cannot, and will not denounce is the systematic violence that underpins the structure of power they benefit from".

Well worth a read!

Trotwatch. An Anarchist Commentary on the Life of the Left. Volume 1, No.1. £1, £5 to lefties.

This droll and well documented journal puts a variety of squirming Trotskyist and other Leninist specimens on the dissecting table.

Trotwatch's probing blade reveals a mess of ludicrous contradictions, scheming manipulation and outright opportunism. Analysed in detail are the recent split that severely crippled Militant, and a "frighteningly detailed" look at the "squalid spectacle of the Left and the General Election". *Trotwatch* says in its editorial that they believe that the continuing dominance of leftism, in all its guises, over most expressions of working class resistance to "things as they are", represents a serious bloc to the creation of a truly revolutionary anti-capitalist movement.

In an accompanying leaflet they point out that many of the problems afflicting British leftism are those that are affecting the real revolutionary movement, that is because notions of class structure and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism have been under seige. As the class struggle intensifies again in the future, Leftism will once again attempt to dominate the newly emerging resistance. As they say, when that happens, it will be even more important to "know thine enemy". Loads of info, gossip and sectariana from an anarchist communist perspective.

Aufheben. No.1. £2. 46 pages.

Despite its ponderous and obscure title, a German word often used in Hegel's dialectics, this new magazine does contain some useful articles. They believe that many comrades, especially in Britain, are afflicted with a virulent anti-intellectualism that creates the ludicrous impression that the Trots are the ones with a grasp of theory. Useful and worth reading are the critique of *Earth First!*, the review of Barrot's essay on anti-fascism, the analysis of the Los Angeles uprising and above all the article on 'Lessons from the Struggle against the Gulf War'. This examines the reactions and activities of revolutionaries in the No War But The Class War committee in which the ACF participated. The NWBTCW is criticised, for among other things, the lack of decent communication between those involved, and because it seemed content to act in a purely ideological way, defending the 'historic class position' in all its purity. To be fair, lack of notification often ensured low turnouts at NWBTCW meetings, and the rapid ending of the war nipped ongoing activity in the bud. But some of *Aufheben's* criticisms are justified. The article is important reading and should be taken into account in any future anti-militarist, anti-war mobilisations.

Ireland: Nationalism and Imperialism — The Myths Exploded, £0.30 + p&p from Subversion, Dept 10, 1 Newton St., Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1HW.

Subversion are a group that holds similar communist, and therefore internationalist, positions, to ourselves, so it's no surprise that this pamphlet should contain much we would wholeheartedly agree with. Like the ACF, Subversion argue that all forms of nationalism offer nothing but defeat to the working class and that in the context of a totally intergrated world economy 'national self-determination' is a leftist fantasy.

The pamphlet successfully rubbishes the pro-IRA arguments put forward by the **Revolutionary Communist Party** *et al.* The 'myths' which Subversion wish to explode are predominantly those cherished by the various leftist outfits who claim to speak for the international working class. However these are not the only 'myths' which dominate today.

So anyone familiar with the struggles of the six counties, especially those of us who hold to an internationalist perspective, may however feel a certain dissatisfaction with this pamphlet. Throughout there is a distinct feeling of detachment and we could be forgiven for thinking that most of Subversion's hatred is reserved for the green variant of nationalism rather than its red, white and blue version. In this pamphlet's desire to attack republicanism we can be led to feel that it is the IRA which is *the* problem. It must be remembered that the reactionary ideology which holds sway amongst the majority of the workers in the 'north' is loyalism.

So, when **Subversion** talk about IRA racketeering net-

ting around £10 million per year (according to *The Guardian*!), we need to ask where such a figure comes from. We should not be fooled by 'black propaganda' put out by the British state. We should also mention that all para-militaries are up to the same and that the provos are far from alone in the intimidation business. Quoting the dodgy 'Families Against Intimidation and Terror Group' is also dubious. This group has consistently failed similarly to attack the best organised terror groups of all — the Army and RIR! A genuine expression of workers' self-organisation they are most certainly not!

This criticism aside, we would recommend that all libertarian revolutionaries get a look at this pamphlet as it is a positive contribution to a debate which is ongoing in our movement.

Libertarian Education

LibEd has published a new book on libertarian education, *No Master High or Low*, by John Shotton in which he states that "Libertarian education...is a set of educational beliefs that seeks to break down the boundaries between teachers and learners, that is grounded in a desire to construct non-coercive and anti-authoritarian pedagogies, and that is not concerned with systems of reward and punishment".

He describes the various free schools that have been set up in this country. Whilst these free schools may act as an example of how learning could be in a different society, too often they end up as dumping grounds for the 'enlightened' rich (Summerhill) or dumping grounds of local authorities for the socially 'maladjusted'. Any concept of libertarian education will have to be harnessed to a mass movement of the working class, or will suffer all the problems of being in a vacuum. Nevertheless, Shotton's book makes interesting reading. Information on the book from Clive Baldwin, 48 Springfield Rd, Leicester LE2 3BA.

NEW BOOKSHOP

Our Aberystwyth comrades have started a bookshop. Open every day from 10am-5pm at Stall 9, New Mini-Market, St James Square, Aberystwyth.

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process.

We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

JOIN US!

THE LAST FEW months have highlighted the failure of capitalism to deliver the goods. The rise of nationalism, often in blackshirt and brownshirt garb, the Rostock riots, the slaughter in ex-Yugoslavia, the deepening recession — or is it a slump? — laying millions of workers off in the West, the drive to the market in Eastern Europe creating havoc for millions of other working class people, the sanctimonious twaddle at the Earth Summit which came to the conclusion to do nothing about the ecological crisis; all of these things show the terrible state the world is in.

The bosses are gloating about how the market is triumphant world-wide. The collapse of state-capitalism has bought a lot of headaches for the boss class, however. The penetration of the market into Eastern Europe is hindered by the bureaucratic nature of the economic and social set-up there. The quick dollar they were hoping to make will not be immediately guaranteed. The social collapse in Eastern Europe has brought its problems, with waves of refugees fleeing to Western Europe, something the boss class are not keen on.

Many people who think and care about social justice are beginning to see that the old solutions put forward, be they Labourist, Stalinist, Trotskyist, or Green are like so many hair-restorers sold by travelling medicine shows — "gauranteed to grow hair on a doorknob" and leading to instant hair loss! Just look at the Labour Party — doesn't it remind you of a Poodle pretending to be a Rotweiler? The so-called Labour 'left' is now seen as people like Gould and Livingstone! The Trades Union Congress can't even do to capitalism what it used to do feebly, that is negotiate a better price for wage labour. We're treated to the sight of the employers' organisation, the CBI, getting all palsy-walsy with Wibbly-Wobbly Willis and his chums at the TUC Congress. "Let's all pull together chaps!". That is, work more closely in keeping independent working class activity at bay.

Militant is thrashing around, with its membership falling by the thousands. In Scotland, it tailends the Scottish Nationalist front, Scotland United. As for the Socialist Workers Party, it aligns itself with Militant's call for a 'real' Labour Party, lurching further to the right.

So the crises of these different organisations, all in their way defending the whole rotten set-up, and the increasing difficulties of capitalism bring confusion and gloom to many. But at the same time, they reveal the real nature of the system of social control; they help people to come to a revolutionary understanding of society.

Decay

While these so called alternatives to capitalism start to decay, small but significant numbers of people are won to the revolutionary position.

We have been greatly encouraged in the last few months by the amount of interest in our ideas. Subscriptions to *Organise!* have shot up to their highest level, and we receive several requests for more info on the ACF every week. Membership of the ACF has soared, and we have gained a number of comrades, some with years of experience, some new to the movement, some radicalised by the anti-poll tax movement. We now feel that our ideas could take off. We appeal to all our readers to seriously think about joining the ACF and help create a dynamic organisation pledged to helping create a new, just, equal, and sane society.

LEADERS

MOST PEOPLE ON the left would argue that 'democracy' is infinitely preferable to fascism and many working class people died in what they saw as a fight against the tyranny of fascism. However, this supposed alternative also takes away our liberty in perhaps a more insidious manner because of the smokescreen it hides behind.

One of the main distinctions between the two is the use of naked force by fascism as opposed to the subtle brainwashing which is used in a democracy. One method is blatant and crude, the other, subtle and sophisticated but achieving the same goal: our passive acceptance of a system that oppresses us. A main part of this menacing strategy is the cult of leadership, a cult which is incompatible with the establishment of a society based on freedom and equality.

In any spectrum of human intelligence, there is a wide range of abilities with most people falling somewhere in the middle, with just a few 'geniuses' and 'idiots'. Therefore, when it comes to transforming society, the collective intelligence, knowledge and experience far outweighs the contribution of a few 'geniuses'.

Despite this wealth of abilities, human history has been marked by the usurpation of struggle and movements for social change by leaders who claim to 'know best'. It has been, and still is, a painful historical struggle of men and women to gain freedom from the political, economic and spiritual shackles which have bound them. But time and time again, having rid themselves of one tyranny, people have replaced it with another. Afraid to use their new found freedom, they hold up their wrists to some new jailer. If anarchist communism is to be achieved and capitalism overthrown, then we must do much more than get rid of the obvious sources of oppresssion. The working class must also transform itself as individuals so as to reject leaders and any new tyranny.

Passivity

It is not surprising that people are so willing to submit to leaders. Capitalist society is organised so as to bleed us of our capacity to think for ourselves and take control of our own lives. This learned passivity manifests itself on the most subtle psychological levels. Individuals have a need to indentify with something so as to gain some kind of recognition and importance. Subcultures within capitalist society such as the Skinheads fulfill this role. There is a dress and hair code that identifies the individual as a member of a group. All the individual has to do to become a part of the group is to conform to the accepted attitudes and behaviour. If the individual begins to question aspects of group behaviour or to challenge the informal leadership structure, then he/she is rejected and loses group membership, a traumatic experience for many. The same analysis could be applied to many political groups eg the Communist Party in the 1950s. Though groups may profess an antagonism to capitalist society, they actually incorporate and crystallise its values.

ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO LIVE WITHOUT THE BLIND FOLD

The most prevalent manifestation of these latent tendencies is the universal demand for leadership. Schools and youth movements are urged to train children for the 'task of leadership'. Job references need to refer to the applicant's 'leadership qualities'. Workers are asked to chose their leaders in the form of union representatives. Political parties from the Conservatives to the extreme left select their leaders and then voters have to chose which among them is to make decisions for the mass of the population. Thus, the cult of leadership pervades the whole of society.

Initiative

Before we examine what is involved in this general desire for leadership, let us distinquish a quality which is often confused with leadership: individual initiative. This is fundamentally the impulse to originate, to construct and, in relation to others, to elicit their approval. It is a self-expressive impulse which has nothing in common with the will to power. This realisation of the self, the expression of the uniqueness of the individual is one of the most essential features of an anarchist communist society and must be preserved at all costs. However, the individual can only realise him/herself in the community and not in spite of this community. This distinction is important because in the first case the individual becomes part of the pattern of society but does not submerge his/her identity whereas in the second case the individual loses his or her individuality.

We are told we need leaders because there would be no discipline. It is assumed that without anyone telling us what to do, we would not know how to behave. But as anarchists we believe that human beings are naturally cooperative and that it is capitalist society and leaders who foster aggressivity and selfish competition.

We are often drawn to charismatic individuals who we allow to lead us. But we must be aware of the techniques that these individuals employ. Their claim to have the answers to our problems is a sham, the truth hidden behind demagogic rituals.

Another distraction is the claim by many parties on the left that what we need is better leaders. In other words, *they* would make better leaders. But this is another dangerous diversion, for what we need is *no* leaders, not *better* ones.

Unnatural

The social hierarchy that we accept as a natural order is just as unnatural and illogical as government. There are no 'natural' leaders only a ruling class which has grabbed power and uses this power to exploit and dominate the mass of the population. Social classes are not ordained by nature but the historic product of an exploitative society. Unfortunately this acceptance of hierarchy has filtered down to all levels of society and even exists in the organisations that workers create to challenge the system.

Collective responsibility is the alternative to leadership and the counterpart to equality. If we are to succeed in building an anarchist communist society, then the working class must learn to rely on itself. And, each individual in that class must be prepared to take responsibility and participate in the transforming of society. The revolution must therefore be not only against the ruling class but against leaders and hierarchy at all levels of society and most importantly, against our own passivity.

POSTER

Bundles of this poster can be got from the London address. Please send donation. Also available: stickers and a leaflet explaining what is anarchist communism.

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Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 22nd February for features and reviews, and 5th March for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation .....

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Who We Are...

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. Its structure is based on groups and individual members. We have members in the following areas:

Aberystwyth
Ashford, Aylesbury
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Chesterfield
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PRESS FUND

NOW IS A difficult time to be asking for money, with many out of work or wondering if they're going to get the chop. Cash is in short supply.

But *Organise!* desperately needs money to continue to appear and to improve. We need money for our projected pamphlets, for the stickers and posters and leaflets we intend to produce. So we are asking you, dear reader, to think about sending something in, no matter how small, to help us continue the fight for anarchist communism. We know that many of you value the ideas presented in *Organise!* So please help us by sending in POs, IMOs, or cash. You can even send us a standing order to our account to regularly support *Organise!* Write to London address for account details. Dig into your pockets now! Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:

£60, Sheffield; £210, London; £5, Pontypool; £8, Suffolk; £7, Nuneaton; £4, Barrow-in-Furness; £6, Gateshead.

WORKERS
The Miners

PRESIDENT HESELTINE has seemingly backed down over the threatened closures of 31 pits. His announcement at the end of March was hailed as a famous victory for the mining communities by much of the ruling class press.

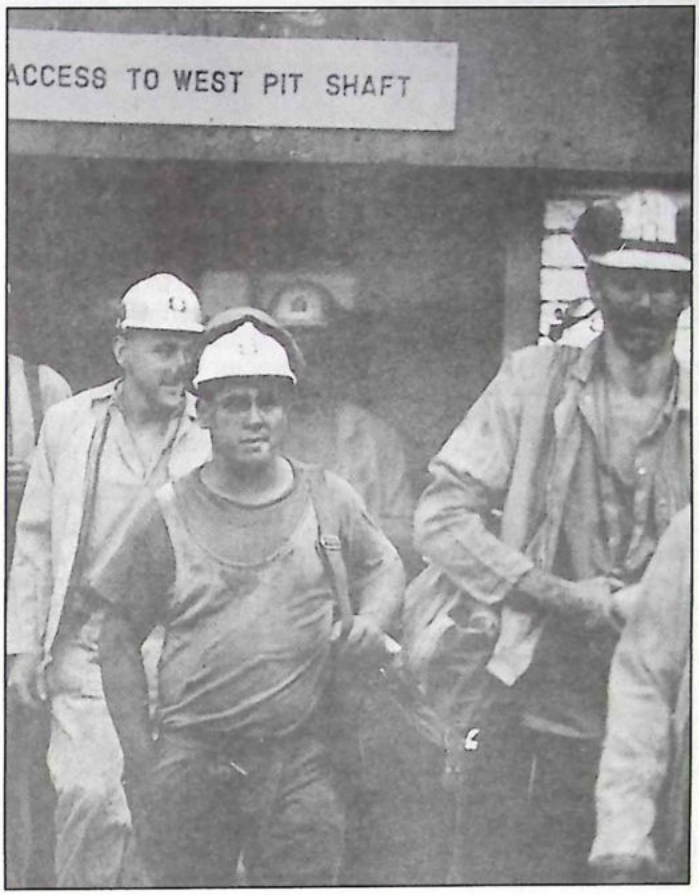
Gloomy picture

But a closer look at what was actually promised shows a much gloomier picture for the miners. Some 12 pits are still doomed, six are mothballed and one is 'in limbo'. What this means is that these pits are to be supposedly kept in running order, with no miners actually working in them! The 12 pits supposedly saved might not be open in a year's time. 5,800 miners are to lose their jobs, on top of the 8,000 who have left the industry since October. The pits will be privatised at the earliest possible opportunity and working practices will be tightened up, with more hours being spent underground. Since the end of the miners' strike of 1984-5, National Coal Board management have adopted increasingly aggressive attitudes towards the miners, and now this will worsen. The government and the boss class hope that pit closures can take place in a camouflaged way with the further quitting of the industry by many miners, fed up with the worsening work conditions.

These supposed 'concessions' have been hailed by the national press, in a campaign to defuse the situation. Alongside these manoeuvres by the boss class, are the actions of the trade unions, including the **TUC** and the **NUM**. As we pointed out in *Organise! 29*, the **TUC** called several days of action, supported by many thousands, to take the heat out of the situation. They were aware of the rising tide of working class anger, and made steps to let a little steam be let off. The anger is still there, and so they have been forced to take what at first sight seems like more radical forms of action.

Courts

The **NUM** has concentrated on mobilising 'public opinion' and going through the courts to stop the pit closures. As we pointed out, this was designed to head off any direct action amonst the miners and other sections of the working class. The **NUM** issued no appeals for solidarity action to those workers directly or indirectly threatened by the pit closures. Now, the **NUM** has developed other methods of containing the actions by miners. Seven pit camps have been set up by women of the mining communities outside threatened mines, along the lines of the Greeenham Common Camp. Women took an active role in the Great Miners' Strike, and now their activities have been harnessed by the **NUM** bureaucracy to their public relations' campaign. Unless the actions of the women of the mining communities break free of the stranglehold of **NUM** bureaucracy, the camps will be just a cover for **NUM** failure to actually take any action, including strikes and occupations and active solidarity from other workers. The pit camps could be transformed into active centres to galvanise action, but at the moment this seems far from the case.



On the face of it, the strike of April 2, involving miners, rail workers and London bus workers, was a positive step, with workers going from ineffectual demonstrations to strike action and united solidarity action with other workers. But the fact is that these one-day strike actions are an effort by the union leaders to limit action. They know that rising discontent must force them to call what appear to be more radical actions. But Scargill, and the rail union leaders like Knapp and Fullick, often decribed as 'lefts' by Leninist organisations, are politically tied to the rest of the union leaderships and are as much part of the apparatus of social control as the 'right-wing' leadership of the **TUC**.

Scargill called for strike action on both 19 January and 18 February. Both times he backed down, after conversations with the **TUC** leadership. Each time miners prepared for action, and each time they were left demoralised.

The Friends of Durruti

New pamphlet!

LONDON ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves. This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the *Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21*.

Copies of the *Friends of Durruti* pamphlet will be available from:

ACF (London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 50p plus postage.

Railworkers

THE SLAUGHTER OF rail lines by British Rail will result in job losses of 40,000 with reductions to up to 40 services. Fares are set to rise by 10% and the unified national timetable is set to disappear under BR proposals.

The rail unions colluded with BR management on the forthcoming privatisations, and accepted the *Organisation for Quality* document that established business and profit centres.

The leader of the biggest rail union RMT, Jimmy Knapp, is famous for his fighting talk. In practice, however, he wholeheatedly agreed to the new structures of negotiation, giving management a freer hand to impose new rules and conditions.

Now the RMT and the white collar union TSSA are turning to the 'public opinion' tactic, lining up solidly behind the public relations tosh of the 'Better Rail Campaign'. Increasing anger from the railworkers forced them to call a ballot for the one-day strike on April 2.

Blame

The unions are attempting to get off the hook with workers by blaming each other. So the RMT blames the traindrivers' union ASLEF for lack of solidarity, whilst ASLEF turns round and does the same. In this way effective solidarity between railworkers is undermined.

More and more railworkers are seeing clearly what the role of the unions is. There is a growing awareness of their connivance with the Labour Party.

They remember how the RMT called off the strike last April so that it would not damage Labour's election chances. They look back to the days of the 'Left' GLC with their Fares Fair plans for London Transport, which resulted in productivity deals and speed-ups.

On the Buses

THE TEN COMPANIES which make up London Buses Ltd have demanded pay cuts of 20%, increase in the working week and job losses.

Sell off

They are justifying this by saying that if they do not cut operating costs, they will lose contracts to private operators in April. This is in line with plans to de-regulate and sell off London bus services by the end of 1993.

Four of the six garages in East London have already closed and the London Forest bus company has collapsed. These worsening conditions in London are reflected in other cities throughout Britain. Fares have shot up, and passenger use has dropped.

The private operators in cutthroat competition have aggravated traffic congestion in city centres whilst country services have been annihilated.

The working class of London can expect the same situation, with worsening traffic chaos, the axing of many routes, the end of concessions for pensioners and yet more fare rises.

Bus workers will face increasing workloads, longer hours and greater stress and pressure.

The principal busworkers' union, the TGWU, has resorted to the usual tactics. They organised a march and lobby of parliament, which they deliberately failed to adequately publicise.

Enquiry

They tried to head off strike action by calling for a select committee to launch an enquiry!

Mass meetings in the garages showed the strength of anger of busworkers and their willingness to fight, and the union was forced to organise a ballot, much as the RMT had done.

ACE

Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Making Progress. Describes how and why the ACF was formed, and the continuing evolution of our ideas and practice. A 'beginner's guide' to ACF! 30p & SAE.

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Myth of Labour's Socialism. Labourism, the ideology that holds the Labour Party together is decaying. This pamphlet explains why, and examines what opportunities will be opened up by the collapse of the Labour myth. 60p & SAE.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

The Post

THE POST OFFICE plans to sack 16,000 workers by March 1996. Whilst the amount of mail has gone up 50% in ten years, nine workers are now expected to do the work of ten. These attacks are in line with Heseltine's review pointing to break-up of the postal services and privatisation.

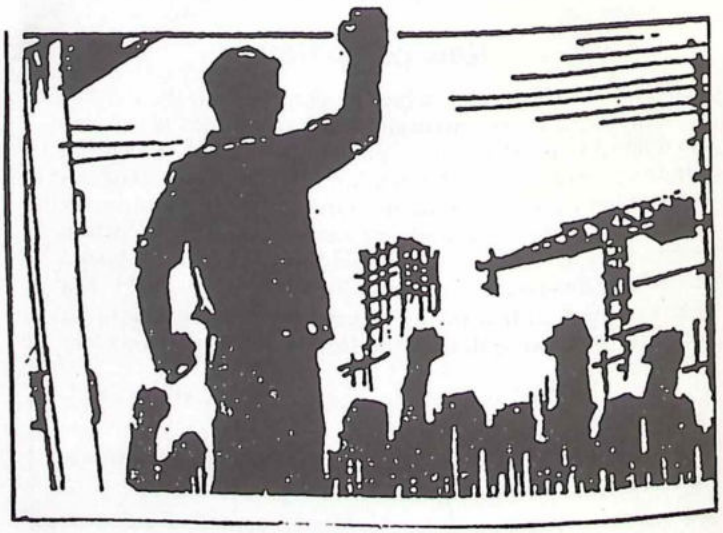
Disillusionment

In the face of this, the UCW, the posties' union, could only call for redundancies not to be compulsory and to express surprise at the number of projected job losses! All this, after the UCW had negotiated a pathetic 2.5% pay rise. Increasing disillusionment with the union has resulted.

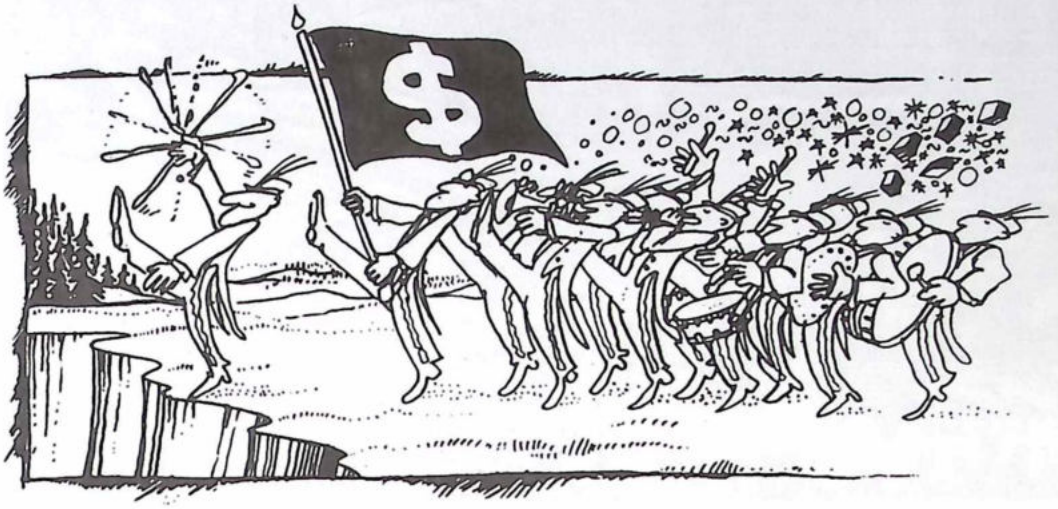
Back in 1988 postal workers went out in 12 days of unofficial action which terrified management and the union. This could happen again, indeed it must.

As can be seen by these brief reports on various industries, only united action, outside the control of the unions, can provide an effective way to fight.

Links have to be built between railworkers, bus and tube workers, and miners as a priority. Beyond this, united action must come with other workers under threat from the State and the bosses, like health workers and postal workers.



Beyond capitalism's core



CORE AND PERIPHERY are words used to describe a basic division in the map of the capitalist world between the so-called advanced capitalist countries and the developing countries.

We can all agree the whole world is dominated by capital, whether as a mode of production or by virtue of the capitalist world market which orders and controls forms of production which are not strictly capitalist Such words have been used to go beyond old terms such as 'Third World', which are derisory and lack any power of explanation. Important questions for revolutionaries in both the core and periphery concern their tasks as revolutionaries. In the hope of opening a debate between revolutionaries in capital's core and those in the periphery, I offer this article. Such debate will be important if there is to be convergence and co-operation of revolutionary groups internationally, which is prerequisite for a successful revolution.

A variety of Third Worldists, Trotskyists and Maoists have offered ideas about the importance of the working classes of the capitalist periphery in the revolutionary struggle. They have contrasted this with the tasks of revolutionaries in core countries, seeing the poor world as the tinder which will begin the transformation of the whole world. Such ideas began with Lenin who, following the failures of the industrial nations' working classes to make revolution, saw the revolutionary torch being passed to those areas which were less developed. This notion was particularly built upon by Mao and his followers. Unfortunately such rigid distinctions with working classes with vastly different forms of experience taking leading roles in the revolutionary struggle is idealistic and non-revolutionary. Keeping such struggles within national boundaries and only appealing to internationalism, not practising it, reasserts the capitalist world system by keeping alive the capitalist world market. I am of the opinion that a successful world revolution will only be built by unity or continuous convergence of revolutionary groups internationally and, consequently, a convergence of and co-operation in the class struggle.

The working classes (I use the plural to denote the fact that there are workers involved in both industrial and agricultural production) of the periphery suffer extremes of exploitation without any welfare state to fall back on. They are poorly paid, underemployed, they often have little chance of medical care, they suffer bad housing, poor education, poor food, and all manner of coercion and oppression. But this description can only be a gross generalisation. Each area of the periphery has its own relation to the capitalist global economy; consequently the working class in each area relates differently to the world class struggle. Despite these differences, though, there is only one enemy — capital — even if it is a hydra of many heads.

Let us look at a few examples to help us draw some conclusions.

Philippines

The Ramos regime has been in power now for nine months, having taken over democratically from the Aquino regime which followed the Marcos 'kleptocracy'. Marcos presided over the organised looting of the Philippine economy, amassing a fortune measured in billions of dollars and deposited all over the world. The Aquino 'yellow revolution' simply changed the faction of the bourgeoisie in power, but provided nothing for the long-suffering working class but fudge and indecision. Ramos now looks to be encouraging investment from the big Asian economies to replace dollars lost through the closing of US military bases. He hopes to solve a major problem of Filipino capital — power cuts — by a massive programme of generating expansion. Filipino workers are still faced with the same evils: a possible coup by the armed forces around General Honasau with 'promises' of clean government; a bourgeois élite which guards its political power and wealth; and continued poverty.

Brazil

Throughout March and April, from the south to the north east, the poor have taken direct action because of extreme needs. The landless peasants have marched to demand land. The landowners' response through their own organisation — the Ruralist Democratic Union — was that "invaders only respect bullets". The hungry have looted warehouses and supermarkets. The Workers' Party has simply talked about the urgent need for agrarian reform.

Last year President Collor was removed for widespread corruption. He was involved in the drugs trade and took huge kickbacks from industry for contracts. Much of this cash was funnelled through Florida. Through patronage the whole government became a 'kleptocracy' — a machine for theft. Known as the 'Alagoas Republic' after the province from where they all come, they managed to net over $1 billion.

All of this has come on top of a declining economy and a population which has doubled in 20 years. Its debt has tripled in that period to $118 billion. Urban income has fallen by 31% in ten years.

Brazilian workers face increasing poverty through a shrinking economy, a bankrupt public sector, massive national debt, continuing homelessness, unemployment and starvation. The boss class can only respond with the Bible, bullets or the ballot box to elect a new corps of kleptocrats or incompetents.

Egypt and Algeria

Both countries have deep problems. Corrupt and western-influenced ruling classes have only one interest: conspicuous consumption. Both bourgeois states have no capacity for pulling their countries out of economic decline. Egypt's liberal élite has more interest in internal squabbles and occasional brutal replies to fundamentalist atrocities. Similarly, the Algerian junta

tect US oil and military interests in 'Operation Desert Storm', and go a long way towards explaining why, for example, on June 12th and 13th, US and other occupying troops, under the cover of the UN, launched a vicious bombing attack on the people of Mogadishu, massacring dozens of people who were peacefully marching to protest the occupation. This savage attack is described as the first phase of a long-term operation which will involve door-to-door searches, 4,000 US ground troops (supported by four warships, from the Persian Gulf) and continued air attacks by AC-130H 'Spectre' gunships and 'Cobra' attack helicopters. Large numbers of Somali citizens have now fled.

The guise of a 'humanitarian' mission has been revealed for what it is... colonial-type foreign occupation. The real goal of the US is to install a puppet government, supported by the brute force of invading troops, so the Pentagon can dominate the Horn of Africa and turn it into another strategic military base in the oil-rich Middle East.

Roots of occupation

Despite US influence over the economic, political and military policies of Somalia, the American media and the US government portray Somalia's ecological, political, ethical and economic crises as problems fuelled completely by Somali domestic policies, isolated from external influences. In reality, Somalia has a history of imperialist-imposed economic and political systems. Because European colonialism split ethnic Somalis into five states — French Somaliland (now Djibouti), Ethiopia, Kenya, Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland (which joined with Italian Somaliland to form Somalia in 1960 and which then seceded in 1991) — Somalia has been at the centre of most interstate conflicts as it tries to unite ethnic Somalis, especially in Kenya and Ethiopia, into one nation. Proceeding the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik's conquest of the Ogaden region (inhabited by ethnic Somalis) between 1887 and 1904, Britain and Italy established national borders separating Ethiopia and the area that is now Somalia without regard for ethnic or ecological divisions.

Somalia's present-day environmental and economic problems can be put down to colonialism. Throughout the 19th century, Britain and Italy imposed colonial systems of economic 'development' in Somalia. Britain commercialised Somalia's pastoral subsistence economy (based upon traditional nomadic herding) to produce surplus livestock to be exported to Aden, the capital of Yemen. Today, Somalia is still dependent on the export of livestock to sustain its economy: livestock consists of 46% of Somalia's Gross Domestic Production and 65% of its export earnings. The surplus of livestock production has resulted in overgrazing and desertification of Somali land, conditions which lead to conflicts between pastoralists over grazing and water rights and between pastoralists and farmers over access to rivers. Ecological degradation has also increased vulnerability to drought and famine.

Oil/military interests

The four American oil giants Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips (and for a brief period Shell) — their interest heightened by the discovery by Hunt Oil of an estimated 1 billion barrels in oil reserves in the underground rift — began to obtain 'oil exploration licences' from the government of the pro-US dictator President Mohammed Siad Barre in 1986, and by the time of his overthrow in January 1991, already held the 'rights' to oil concessions amounting to 2/3rds of Somalia's land, which allowed the oil companies to explore and exploit potential oil reserves, particularly in northern Somalia. Today, because of Operation Restore Hope, the US military presence in Somalia safeguards the multi-million dollar investments in the region.

The close ties between Conoco and the US military further attests to the US oil interests underlying Operation Restore Hope. Conoco allowed US government officials to transform its corporate compound in Mogadishu into an American HQ. And yet the restoration of a stable government in Somalia is essential not only for the purpose of safeguarding US oil interests, but also to secure Somalia as a strategic military location commanding the Red Sea and to maintain US political clout over governing regimes in the Horn of Africa, which includes Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan.

For more than 30 years, the US poured military arms, worth approximately 1 billion dollars, into Ethiopia and Somalia. In the ten year period before the collapse of Barre's political authority in autumn 1989, the US government had given Barre's regime a total of $579 million in US arms transfers, consisting of military supplies. As one of the largest suppliers of weaponry to Barre, the US government helped to maintain Barre's political control in Mogadishu. Barre used the military arms provided by the US and other nations to suppress political dissent, both by directly suppressing clan-families which opposed his rule and by pitting rival clan-families against one another by supplying their militias with weapons. Through arms transfers and the 1990 'arms-for-bases agreement" between the US and Barre, the American government not only influenced the domestic politics of Somalia, but secured US political clout over Somalia and North-east Africa regions, as well as guaranteeing 'discretionary' rights over the use of Somali military facilities at Berbera and Mogadishu — locations from which the US government could serve as a 'watchdog' for the pro-West regimes in the Middle East and Northeast Africa, Western access to Middle Eastern oil, and commercial shipping routes from the West to the Indian Ocean. All of these US interests would be threatened by the takeover of the Horn of Africa by anti-US political/military powers.

A Somali writer in the *New Internationalist* a few months back wondered why all the key administrative and commercial posts in Somalia are held by foreigners and Somali ex-patriots, even when in many cases obviously less qualified and experienced than Somali citizens. Had she been able to see beyond that white-washing so spectacularly and hypocritically engineered by Western politicians and media, she might well have understood the reasons.

to have an empty, unused building and they challenge authority by finding a home for themselves without waiting for the council or housing association to find them one while paying extortionate rent, or biding time in grim Bed and Breakfasts. If you don't play by the rules of private property, you are depriving some bloodsucker of rent or interest payments. Property must be protected over the interests of the homeless.

No anarchist would deny the naivety of those among the travellers who believe they can run away to the hills and forget the state, because we know that the state hasn't forgotten them. Nor will their actions bring about the downfall of capitalism. However, we should realise that travellers and squatters represent an attempt at autonomous social organisation and are a thorn in the side of capitalism and the state and thus should be supported.

JD

The above article was sent in by a comrade outside the ACF.

South Africa — Betrayal and compromise

THE COLUMNS OF both the establishment press and the left press were recently full of glowing testimonials to the murdered leader of the South African Communist Party and African National Congress, Chris Hani. We do not share their dismay. Hani prepared his own grave by the policies he and his party pursued. His murder shows the logical outcome of such policies.

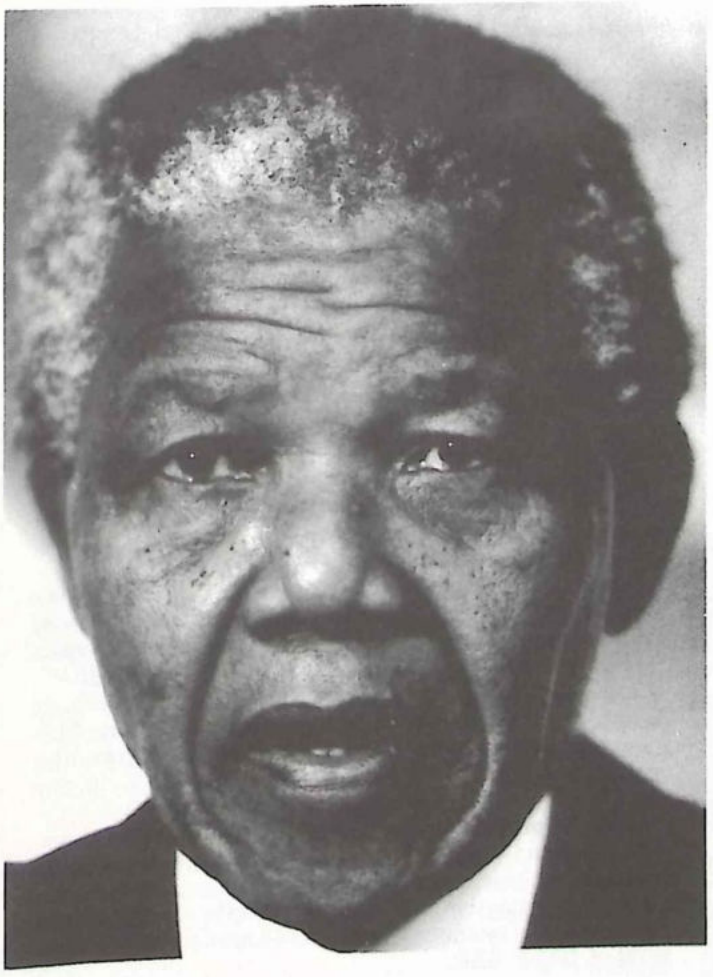
Hani was a son of a Transkei construction worker, becoming an active member of the ANC from 1957. He entered the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in 1962. From then on he engaged in underground work, serving two years in prison. He became an active member of the South African Communist Party. In 1974 he was elected to the ANC executive, becoming Umkhonto chief of staff in 1982, and general secretary of the SACP in 1991.

As Umkhonto chief, he was responsible for the enforcement of the political line of the ANC and SACP leaderships.

In 1984, in the Umkhonto camps in Angola, a mutiny broke out. The rank and file were dissatisfied with the opulent lifestyles of the leadership, and the command that they be sent to East Germany to be trained, before being sent to help the MPLA regime in Angola against its UNITA rival.

The mutineers demanded that they stop fighting UNITA and transfer all their forces to fighting the South African regime. They also demanded an investigation of the ANC security apparatus, as well as an investigation of its activities and of the prison camp Quatro, which was nicknamed 'Buchenwald'.

Hani suggested that the mutineers form a committee to present their grievances to the ANC leadership. This committee negotiated a surrender of arms. After the surrender, Hani, along with one of the most corrupt Umkhonto leaders, Joe Modise, and an armed detachment, swept into the camp and began arresting mutineers, one of whom was shot in the back. He recovered and was sent to a labour camp, where he witnessed the torture and murder of hundreds of Umkhonto militants. Hani must at the very least have been aware of these atrocities, and, more likely, was directly involved in the crushing of dissent in the ANC ranks. He had become a brutal Stalinist thug, not the "lovely human being" described by Brian Bunting, another SACP leader (*Morning Star*, 20 April 1993). Come to think of it, remember the portrayal of Stalin as jovial Uncle Joe?



Left: Mandela has to make sure the struggle doesn't get out of control.

In 1989 Hani was confronted at ANC community meetings in Tanzania, which he himself had convened to explain the line of the leadership in relation to groups of people imprisoned by the ANC. He was challenged by the meetings and ex-mutineers. At one meeting at Dakawa he screamed from the platform that the decision on rehabilitation of mutineers could not be challenged: "The decision is unchallenged, it is an order from the National Executive Committee". He then ordered his security to arrest those who disagreed with the NEC decision, which was resisted by the mass of the meeting.

Assassination

It is likely that Hani was involved in the public assassination of Sipho Phungulwa in the Transkei in June 1990. This ANC militant had been involved in the 1984 mutiny and three weeks before his death had assisted at a press conference to anti-apartheid journalists, which revealed the suppression of the mutiny and the repression within the ANC. Former mutineers believed that Phungulwa was silenced because he knew too much, with his detailed knowledge of Umkhonto operations in the Transkei and his past job as Hani's bodyguard. He had also trespassed on Hani's territory, where he was setting up his own military fiefdom separate from that of Modise, the Umkhonto commander.

Hani had great ambitions. He hoped to inherit Mandela's mantle and become a future leader of South Africa. He had formed alliances with Winnie Mandela, in opposition to the Nelson Mandela group. Like all of the ANC and SACP leaders, he lived in a wealthy mansion. He had developed a reputation as a hero of the working class and of the armed struggle, a reputation which he had zealously cultivated himself. Since his elec-

tion as general secretary of the Communist Party, he had pushed for rapprochement with the Afrikaaner regime and for national unity. According to him the "oppressors in the past are actually talking to us and are showing readiness to negotiate for democratic elections". So oppression was now in the past, and the destabilisation that the regime was pursuing via assassinations, and the fostering and financing of Buthelezi's Inkatha, could be ignored. He was instrumental in sabotaging the mass struggles of the black South African working class, by his promoting of a way forward through 'democratic elections'. What he failed to take into account was that large sections of the regime were not prepared to relinquish power so easily. Whilst some elements were prepared to negotiate a democratic fix, in particular the capitalists, others, particularly in the armed forces and the secret police, were ready to plot and to murder. Political personalities close to the ANC, like David Webster and Anton Lubowski, had already been murdered. After the murder of Hani, popular anger against the regime burst onto the streets once more. Nelson Mandela attempted to control the crowds and was shouted down, after his calls for 'peace'. In Capetown and other cities, widespread rioting took place.

The role of the ANC and the SACP is to control mass anger and unrest seething in South Africa. The interests of the capitalists and the Stalinists are in close convergence. The future profitability of South African capitalism depends on the working class being weakened and demoralised.

And in the unions...

One of the major planks in the platform of ANC/SACP determination to spike the guns of popular discontent has been through the unions. For a brief period, the unions that developed in South Africa in the '70s during a period of workplace upsurge, appeared to be developing syndicalist and independent characteristics. The ANC and SACP targeted the union leaderships for recruitment so that now the unions are under their control. One symptom of this, but also of trade unionism in general, is what COSATU is doing with its funds. COSATU is the major trade union federation, with a membership of 1,300,000. It invested its pension and other funds in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange! COSATU set up their own unit trust, the Community Growth Fund, arguing that not only would it bring them profits, but that they could influence the behaviour of the big firms! So shares would not be bought with companies with a record of union-bashing, support for the 'homelands' and apartheid, or manufacture or selling harmful products. Big gold companies like Driefontein and tobacco giants like Rembrandts, were excluded from the list of shares to be bought.

Unions invest

The capitalists in South Africa are falling over themselves to get this investment. The world slump has affected South Africa's economy and made it stagnant. At the moment COSATU's fund is less than £10 million. But the capitalists know that this will increase considerably, and that black workers' money power is the most dynamic factor in an otherwise sluggish economy. We predicted in *Organise!* 23 that the unions would be vital in engineering a 'new deal' for the sake of capitalist profitability. We did not foresee that this would directly involve money from workers' pockets. As Tommy Olifant, chairman of the unit trust said recently: "Our aim is not to punish the companies but to change them". The aim of the ANC/SACP and their union adjuncts is not to overthrow capitalism, but to run it more efficiently. This will mean an all-out attack on any workplace and township self-organisation that has not been integrated into their apparatuses. Far from liberation for the great mass of black working people of town and country, what is in store is business as usual, that is continuing exploitation. They will have to continue to struggle, and this struggle will mean that they will have to break with the ANC and the ANC unions. The fall of apartheid will mean that the black working class will see that its so-called friends are in fact its enemies.

SOMALIA — colonialism by other means?

The sham of 'Operation Restore Hope'

SOMALIA IS AN occupied country. It is occupied by United Nations forces — in other words, by forces under the *de facto* command of the imperialist countries, particularly Washington. When, late last year, George Bush launched 'Operation Restore Hope' — sending more than 20,000 US troops to Somalia under the guise of a 'humanitarian' effort to relieve a country ridden by famine, drought, and political strife — the politicians and media had, of course, dressed it up as a rescue operation: Somalis had been going hungry, UN forces would protect those who fed the Somalis.

Yet both the media and the then-President failed to mention that earlier US intervention had destabilised Somalia in the first place — that the US had pushed Somalia to make war on Ethiopia, and that this war had undermined the Somali regime and finally led to the break-up of the country. They also omitted to mention the vital economic and geopolitical 'interests' fuelling Bush's decision to send in US forces: that the 'pacification' of the East African nation protects the interests of four major American petroleum corporations with oil stakes in Somalia, as well as US global interests in Somalia as a strategic location providing military access to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. No, the media just said that Somalia was hungry and in chaos... and the US military, disguised as UN forces, would set it straight. Right now — even after the 'withdrawal' of American troops — there are 18,0000 foreign troops occupying Somalia in the strategic and oil rich Horn of Africa.

These underlying foundations for US military intervention in Somalia render 'Operation Restore Hope' indistinguishable from the 1991 US invasion of Kuwait to pro-

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Twyford Down and the State

TWYFORD DOWN IS a beautiful area of high ground lying SE of Winchester in Hampshire.

It is rich in historical features such as the site of an Iron Age village, pre-Roman field systems, and ancient trackways known as the Dongas, which a group of protestors have named themselves after. They have been camped on the site to defend it since at least last summer and constant actions have been going on with locals, Friends of the Earth supporters (who soon dropped out) and above all Earth Firsters who have been consistently in action against the proposed M3 eight-lane motorway beside the already

existing four-lane bypass near Winchester College. Their tactics include sabotage against the main construction company slowing down work and a national Day of Action last November in which they stopped some destruction of landscape.

Then on 9 December Winchester College got an eviction order from their land which they had sold to the Department of Transport. Group 4 Security guards were hired and physically fought with the protesters and brought in bulldozers. There was considerable violence on this day, including some alleged sexual assaults on women protesters. Now the earthmovers have moved in as of 23 February to start the destruction of the Down.

The fight to save the Down lasted a week, with the protestors finally being evicted with great brutality. In one opinion poll only five per cent of Winchester's population wanted the Twyford Down cutting. 'Green celebrities' like Porritt and Bellamy as well as the Friends of the Earth lent their support to the campaign and direct action to save the Down was even mooted by the thoroughly respectable Residents' Association and Twyford Down Association. But this was all rhetoric and was, unsuprisingly, never put into practice when the DOT with the hired security men ruthlessly evicted the Dongas protestors.

Class Struggle

To many, Twyford Down may seem like another Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) of little relevance to class struggle activists. But the Twyford Down affair, like the planned destruction of Oxleas Wood for similar reasons, is part of an international attack on the countryside and the environment for the needs of capitalism. The British State will tolerate no opposition to its plans, and will use State violence if it feels it to be necessary. The government has the powerful backing of the road lobby, and has need of a road infrastructure geared to compete with the high-speed rail link to the Channel Tunnel. Besides Twyford Down, there are over 15 new road schemes in preparation or under construction.

Government expenditure on road schemes has gone up phenomenally since 1979. A vast number of historic and environmental sites are under threat. And this is just in Britain. The road scheme here is part of an international plan to provide Europe with a modernised road system geared to the free trade principles of the Single Market. France plans to double its road system by the year 2000, including driving a road through the Massif Central mountains. The European Commission plans a 50% growth of the road infrastructure.

This is not all. The European Community is providing funds for several environmentally damaging hydro-electric projects. These include the diversion of the Aeheloos River in Greece, which will threaten many species of bird and ruin the livelihood of hundreds of fishing families; the funding of 250 dams in Spain, which will destroy more than 100 ecological sites; the funding of a large bridge over the Tagus in Portugal, where the most environmentally damaging of three routes was chosen.

The fight against the Twyford Down cutting has relevance to the fightbacks against roads in the rest of Britain. A nationwide fightback against roads would include mobilisations against the Oxleas Wood development and the M11 link road through Hackney Marshes. It would need to link up with the developing opposition to road schemes and other forms of ecological damage throughout Europe.

The fight at Twyford Down was bogged down in legalistic appeals to the European Court, and a letter-writing campaign to the Government and the Queen! The Dongas Tribe, to their credit did attempt to use direct action to stop the development. What was lacking however, was a mass mobilisation, so that the cutting could be physically stopped due to weight of numbers. There is an urgent need to link up the fight against road schemes to the fight of railworkers and bus workers. The car economy promoted by capitalism has to be directly related to the attacks on public transport, and the vision of a new society which would be geared to environmental harmony and the expansion of a free public transport system. The fight in the countryside has to go in tandem with inner-city actions against road schemes, such as Carmageddon mass blockages of roads that are beginning to develop.

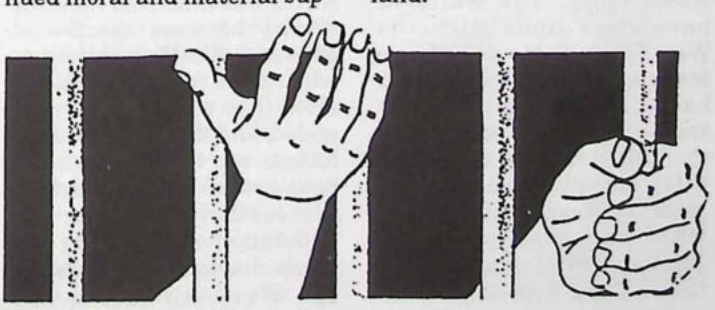
Nigerian comrades freed

IN OUR LAST issue we had an article on the repression and imprisonment of the libertarian socialists of the Awareness League of Nigeria.

Legal costs

On 29 January the four comrades were released after eight long hard months. According to the Awareness League, the comrades looked "badly emaciated, weak and sick". The four were released on bail but have to report weekly to the secret poice. It is feared they may be re-arrested any time. The Awareness League asks for continued moral and material support. They have legal costs of about US$12,000. Send contributions — either International Money Orders or UK bank cheques by express to: Awareness League c/o Samuel Mbah, PO BOX 28, Agbani, Enugu State, Nigeria.

London ACF mounted a picket and handed out leaflets about the imprisonment outside Nigerian Airlines office. Pickets and demonstrations also took place in Dublin, Hamburg and New York. Letters of protest and petitions were sent from Germany, S. Africa, S. Korea, Turkey, India, Brasil, Italy, Canada, USA, Russia, Bulgaria, Norway, Spain, Estonia and Poland.



Warlords or US troops — what's the difference?

THE MEDIA HAS functioned well in both Europe and the United States in putting the joint US-European intervention in Somalia over as a *humanitarian* act. The 36,000 troops who landed in Somalia weren't there to protect the Somali population against the ravages of the local warlords. They were there to protect the interests of their *own ruling classes*.

For example in France there was a massive exposure of photogenic Somali babies dying of hunger in silence. Public opinion was manipulated to allow the French participation in the adventure. Since the landing there has been little footage of children and women dead from hunger but plenty of well armed military supermen.

Inevitable

The wave of sympathy and solidarity with the starving of Somalia was cynically exploited by the boss classes and the State apparatuses of the US and the West, so that military intervention could be accepted as the inevitable logic by many ordinary people faced with the feeling of powerlessness.

Alongside the images of emaciated children were those of a country delivered over to chaos, where the chiefs of military clans let loose their Mad Max men at arms on a population that they starved and crushed beneath the wheels of their armoured Toyotas.

This picture was partly true, but did not reveal the whole story. The warlords have close links with the West. **The National Movement of Somaliland (NMS)** has a provisional government seated in Paris and accuses the United Nations of making them submit to the central power of Mogadishu S Barre, who was overthrown in January 1991, but who maintained links with the Pentagon and the **CIA**, who allowed him to re-establish himself in Somalia. M Abchir, leader of the **Somalian Democratic Socialist Front** was armed by the West via their allies in the Middle East (Egypt, the Gulf monarchies). The interim President, Ali Mahdi, was supported by Italy, who delivered 10 tonnes of arms and three tonnes of bank notes to him via Kenya in exchange for letting him use Somalia as a dumping ground for toxic waste.

Behind the warlords are their Western godfathers. If the famine in Somalia has been aggravated by the war between the different clans, it remains above all the work of the Great Powers whose 'humanitarian' intervention disguises objectives that are less openly admittable. It should be remembered that the legacy of civil war throughout Africa was inherited from the rivalry between the Soviet Bloc and the Western allies, who armed different factions. Now that the cold war has ended, and the Soviet bloc has foundered, these armed factions are left without funding, increasingly pillaging the population and robbing the humanitarian aid provided by the West. Ali Mahdi and General Aydid, who broke with Mahdi and heads his own faction, are two of the richest men in Somalia, thanks to their control of food distribution and traffic in drugs.

The US government, after its demonstration of military might with Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait and Iraq, did not want to rest on its laurels. It wanted to confirm its role of world leader by digging in in this part of the world. The Somalian operation allowed this to take place. Somalia is now the base camp and aircraft carrier for the defence of the interests of American big business. It overlooks the searoads of the petrol tankers, it is close to the Gulf and the Middle East, and is situated in the zone of influence of French interests coveted by Washington.

Intervene

This forward camp for the USA on the East African coast can allow it to intervene in this zone against the interests of the French (or European) ruling class. It could intervene in Chad, in Zaire, throughout North Africa where French interests are under threat, in particular in Algeria. It could attack Libya or the Sudan and could control the Middle East which it regards as its patch. It can now better support its faithful ally Moubarak in Egypt, increasingly under internal threat. The USA is worried that the stability of Egypt is in jeopardy as a pro-Western state in the Arab world.

Added to this is the determination to get over the humiliation of the Vietnam war, a process that started with the intervention in the Gulf. In this way the 'Vietnam syndrome' that shackled any American military intervention abroad can be countered. The Somalian operation will also help on an international level, with people getting used to US invasions.

Under cover of humanitarianism, the arrival of Western troops is to counter the chaotic political situation due to the collapse of the central government in Mogadishu. This is seen as a dangerous example for the neighbouring countries of Egypt to the north and Kenya to the south. On 18 May 1992 the tribal chiefs of the north proclaimed the independence of Somaliland and the division of Somalia. A little later, on 28 May, on the other side of the border, Eritrea proclaimed its independence from Ethiopia, fol-

Operation Restore Oil

The US petrol companies actively pushed Bush to mount the Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.

Concessions

Four major American companies (Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips) obtained concessions for prospecting nearly two thirds of Somalia just before the pro-US president Siad Barre was overthrown in January 1991. The chaos that followed interrupted profitable investigations for oil in a country classed by the World Bank as one of the two most promising African countries in terms of petrol resources.

The head offices of Conoco in Mogadishu were transformed into a base of operations for the US forces several days before the arrival of the Marines. Operation Restore Hope? More like Operation Restore Oil!

lowed by attempts by Ogaden and Tigre to break away from the central government. Alongside these secessionist movements is the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. In Somalia, this is well organised in the **Al Ittihad** movement, which has recruited throughout all the clans and factions. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is an increasing threat to the government. In Sudan, the Koranic Law has been adopted as a constitution and Khartoum has become the refuge and the base for Algerian and Tunisian fundamentalists.

Humanitarianism

An intervention by Western troops, under the cover of humanitarianism, is designed to limit and counter these menaces. This precious alibi has been useful for hoodwinking public opinion at home by saying: "For the first time, the United Nations is intervening for purely humanitarian reasons, to do good, to feed the starving, protect the defenceless and open the way to political, economic and social reconstruction in Somalia".

The US intervention in Somalia points to a clash between the Western powers, in particular between France and the USA, over their interests in this part of Africa. After having lost its zones of influence in the Lebanon and Iraq without any replacements, France sees the areas that it has regarded as its own for a long time as under threat: Algeria, Chad, and Djibouti where the government is now backed by the US whilst France gives its support to a pro-French opposition.

This rivalry between the Western powers and the increasing domination of the USA points to the growing 'everyone for himself' attitude among the different fractions of the international ruling class.

In attempting supremacy in what were the economic and political reserves of France, the USA is attempting to weaken and destabilise the European bloc, of which France along with Germany are the most important elements.

Whilst they are aware of this, the French ruling class has no choice but to range themselves behind the banner of Uncle Sam. They have to associate themselves with the US operation to defend their own interests and attempt to reinforce their own influence over the new Somali leaders that the USA will impose. They are conscious of US supremacy in Somalia. Out of 36,000 men deployed by the Western powers, 28-30,000 are American against 2,000 French troops.

The Somali masses, comprising a small urban working class and a vast number of poor peasants, have already scented the real reason for Western intervention. The fleeting joy amongst some that the West would deliver them from the warlords has now disappeared. There is growing hostility to the occupation forces, sometimes breaking out in outbursts of violence.

GOD

YOU CAN USUALLY find some saving grace in any religion. Islam for example stresses community solidarity, Christianity love of our fellow (sic) human beings, whilst Buddhism has concern for every living creature, and so on. On the basis of religious inspiration some of the world's greatest art has been produced from the beautiful Mosques of Isfahan to the wall paintings of Ajanta to the frescos on the Sistine Chapel. However, the damage caused by religions both as philosophical systems and in their practical application makes them a serious enemy of human freedom.

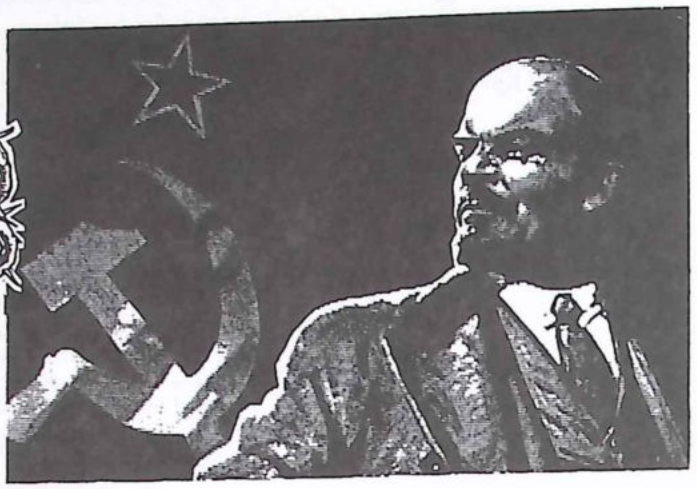
It is dangerous to generalise about religions since they vary enormously in very many respects, but from an anarchist viewpoint they must all be seen as obstacles at best, or more usually as enemy belief systems. **Bakunin** in his work *God and the State* has some interesting criticisms to make, but it is almost entirely devoted to a discussion of Christianity and is mainly concerned with its application in Europe. **Marx** in characterising religion as the "opium of the people" is half right, in respect of national or state religions. The idea of the 'divine right of Kings' and the sickening sight of priests blessing troops before they go off to face death at the front are obvious examples of this.

His view that religion is "the fantastic reflection in men's minds" (sic) of the material world is an interesting starting point which has some validity. He made the point that in the so-called religions of the 'Book', Judaism, Christianity and Islam, god is seen as the great father in the sky, reflecting the earthly reality of male domination. **Engels** too, in his article on the Book of Revelation offers an intriguing analysis of that mystical work in terms of language analysis, proving it to be a coded description of Christianity in the Roman world.

The difficulty with materialist analyses of religions is that they usually ignore or reject psychological and cultural factors and in doing so underestimate their power. The Marxist, **August Bebel**, proposed a crude evolutionary theory of religion in which he believed it would disappear as science and society develop. In our present world where science and technology have been used to dominate the planet and its people, religion remains as strong as ever. In fact we are seeing a religious resurgence on a world scale. For example, the resurgence of Islam in the Middle East may in part be due to the effects of international capitalism, but equally is surely an expression of the despair felt by many *of all classes* in the face of decaying culture. Fundamentalist Islam is an attempt to reclaim feelings of self-worth. How else can the widespread Islamic militancy by women in Iran and elsewhere be explained? Why else do they embrace a belief system which enslaves them?

Conflicting

Religions are not reducible to pseudo-scientific analyses as touted by Marxists. Religions often contain conflicting qualities which can either reinforce or undermine the status-quo. Christianity has been the most successful religion in terms of numbers. It is supposed to be a source of salvation for the poor and op-



pressed, yet historically the picture is more complex. On the one hand it was embraced by slaves during the Roman Empire, but when it became the Empire's official religion it was used to justify slavery. For the last 2000 years Christianity has been both a justification for class society and the state and a reason for their overthrow. Christianity as rebellion has a long history including the Levellers, Diggers etc., during the English Civil War. Islam has had a similar dual quality. For example the Wahabbi sect of Islam was the most communitarian and egalitarian example of Islam, but when it was successful in Arabia it became transformed under the Saud family into an ideology of hypocrisy and repression. Islam (as an ideas system) barely tolerates government — we need only submit to God. Yet in all of the Islamic worlds, the most repressive states prevail. On the other hand such states are extremely unstable, being essentially illegitimate since none of them fulfil the requirements of the Koran.

Most religions are opposed to the interests of women. On a trivial level the **Church of England** is split over the ordination of women. The **Catholic Church** has turned the hatred of women into a fine art. Through the glorification of womanhood which is unattainable it justifies their slavery. The cult of the Virgin Mary as a central element of Catholicism has aided the spread of a male dominated religion. The Catholic bureaucracy is led by old men. The Pope and the cardinals etc., pontificate on matters which are of life and death proportions. By banning abortion and contraception the Church forces millions of women to continually wear out their bodies through repeated child bearing. **Islam** clearly oppresses women. The role of women is to run the household and raise children whilst it is the responsibility for men to provide for them. Islam accepts the superiority of husbands over their wives and proscribes clear rules of behaviour. For example the Koran proscribes a system of beatings which husbands can apply to their wives (this is clearly spelt out in the Penguin edition whilst the 'official' translation aimed at a western audience interprets the Arabic text in milder terms). Hinduism is a very conservative religion in terms of the role of women. An aspect of its practice actually involves the murder of women. The so-called voluntary suicide of widows who burn themselves to death on their husband's funeral pyre is illegal in India, but cases still occur, especially in rural areas of India. How many women have been forced to choose this particularly disgusting form of death will never be known.

Hinduism, with its caste system, is also well known for its sanctioning of rigid social inequality. From the Bhramins downwards every Hindu has a pre-ordained role eg, soldier, carpenter, farmer etc., which can only change on death and re-birth. What is less well known is that many Christians and Muslims in India also preserve the caste differences. In Tamil Nadu, for example, untouchables are prevented from entering churches which are run by high caste Christians. This is an interesting example of ignoring religious doctrine for social and economic ends. The idea of social inequality is an essential feature of Islam. It accepts slavery as a perfectly reasonable system of ownership and enshrined in the notion of 'zakat' (ie., charity to the poor) is the acceptance of wealth and poverty, though the poor shouldn't be too poor! Christianity in its semi-official form in Britain is deeply attached to the state. The Queen is head of the Church of England and the bishops sit in the House of Lords. Although the divine right to rule is no longer accepted, a cosy relationship between the monarchy and the Church ensures their mutual benefit. Pity the royal brats with their marital problems, divorce etc., have somewhat undermined the 'sanctity of marriage'.

State Religion

What is interesting is how an ostensibly atheistic belief system should have become transformed into something like a state religion. **Marxism-Leninism** in Russia and China both granted semi-divine status to its saints. Lenin, Stalin and Mao were all preserved by so-called revolutionaries for the masses to worship. So far, only Stalin has been buried. The other two lie frozen in their tombs in Moscow and Beijing.

Many religions claim universal status in that they are meant to be applicable to all of humanity. There are plenty of exceptions to this rule, **Judaism** is meant for Jews and Hinduism is for the people of India. Christianity and its warring factions, Islam and Buddhism (insofar as this is a true religion) all claim to have the message for all of us. Accordingly, there is little room for compromise between them, especially when these religions are taken in the fundamentalist sense of divinely inspired truth. To an extent this explains religious wars such as the Crusades, though the prospect of loot and power also played a part. When religious intolerance is allied to nationalism, then violence is the likely outcome. The long term animosity between Protestantism and Catholicism has a strong measure of national-religionism in it, accepting the imperialist involvement as well. In the former Yugoslavia, Catholic-nationalism confronts Islam and Orthodox Christianity. In India a growing nationalism combined with a resurgence of Hinduism has caused thousands of deaths and extreme intolerance for other religions. Nationalism and fundamentalist Islam has led to the repression of the **Bahai** faith, and so on.

Health warning

In the end we have to conclude that religions are highly dangerous and deserve an anti-government health warning. When we come to the issue of sex, religions become especially intolerant. Though Hinduism has its temple women for the use of the 'priests', like the three main monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam, any sex carried on outside marriage is banned. Homosexuality, incest, masturbation, you name it, it's wrong if not okayed by the religious texts...and that usually means lifetime heterosexuality between the dominant man and his wife (wives). The result has been untold misery and repression for millions.

Religion needs to be fought vigorously. The psychological comfort it gives has to be weighed against the damage it does. It is not enough to state as Lenin did, hypocritically, that religion is a private matter. Religions are not private if they seek world conversion to their particular and exclusive creed.

Ecology and Enlightenment

WITHIN THE ACF the article 'Ecology and Class' has initiated an ongoing series of articles in *Organise!* which has attempted to give a class struggle anarchist analysis to the issue of ecology. So far we have examined the related roles of the IMF, World Bank, transnational corporations and the State within capitalism, with its logic of profits, growth and competition, and how this works to produce the current ecological crisis. We have also been developing a critique of the responses to this crisis such as lifestylism, green consumerism, pressure groups and the *Green Party*.

In concentrating our analysis on the way capitalism is responsible for our environmental degradation and, therefore, the necessity of overthrowing capitalism, are we assuming that the exploitation of the environment would end automatically in a post-revolutionary society? We don't believe that this would necessarily be the case.

It is important to recognise that capitalism is *able* to function *because it uses* ideas within our culture which are shared throughout the social structure. Like racism and sexism, ideas of nature as a threat to be controlled and exploited are deeply ingrained in our attitudes and culture, often unconsciously. These ideas need to be challenged and changed if we are not to reproduce the same antagonisms and power relations in a post- capitalist society. So we need to look at how these ideas have developed historically, whose interests they serve and how we can move beyond them.

Antagonistic

Although the antagonistic relationship between culture and nature can be traced back at *least* as far as the establishment of patriarchal christianity in Western Europe, the idea of this relationship takes on its greatest significance in the philosophy of the 18th century **Enlightenment**. The ideas of the Enlightenment, which were crucial for the development of modern capitalist society, focus on the importance of rational, scientific analysis as a means of liberating 'man' from the constraints of superstition, irrationality and nature. Enlightenment thought held that a strange and dangerous world should be analysed, classified and brought within the control of rational, western man. This is the era that saw the first encyclopedia compiled in which nature was described as 'red in tooth and claw'. It was also the era which produced the French Revolution and saw the historic rise of bourgeois capitalism.

Within the world-view of bourgeois, educated western man, oppositions were established between his own internal world of *culture* and the menacing 'other' of *nature* which must be tamed and brought within the comprehension and service of his interests. So, for example, the colonised people of Africa, America and Asia were represented as being 'other', savages, closer to nature, less evolved, irrational and thus incapable of running their own affairs. This served to justify their exploitation by the rational, cultured man of the West. The working and peasant classes were also seen to be 'other' and their behaviour and customs was a threat and hindrance to their use by capital. Football, originally played by huge numbers in the streets, was removed to a specified rectangle of grass surrounded by stands and seats at which huge numbers of working class people could now only *watch* and *pay* to see just 22 men playing the game. The production of alcohol was concentrated in the hands of profit-making concerns and its sale limited to licensed premises at particular hours. Measures such as these were intended to make a wild, hedonistic and irresponsible class into a controlled, sober, consumerist workforce.

Women, who had been 'others' for centuries, found this view strongly reinforced by the new bourgeois ideology. Victorian values portrayed women as evil and irrational and as needing to be locked up within the prison of the bourgeois family. Their purpose was to reproduce a willing, happy-to-be-exploited workforce.

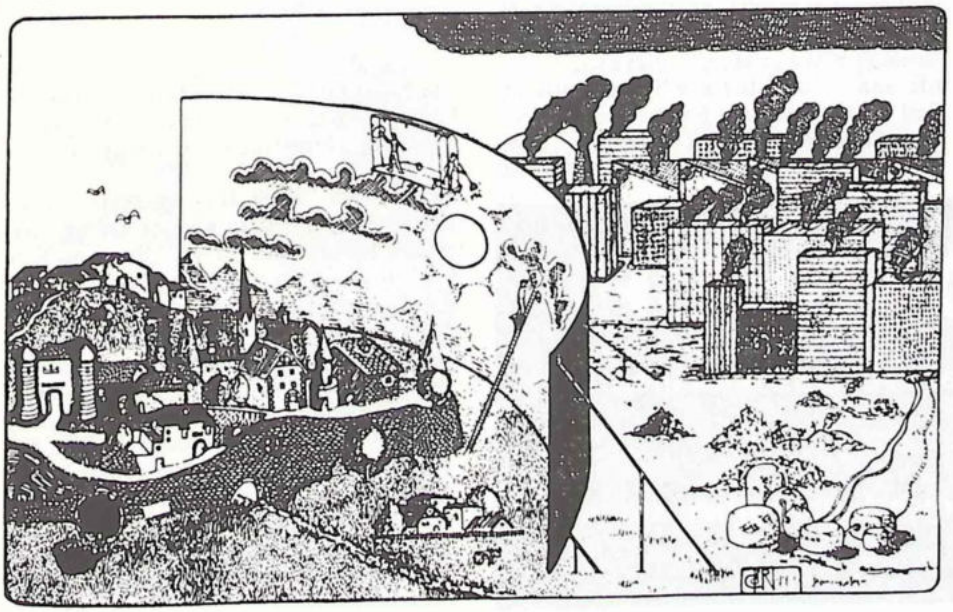
The great 'other' to Western culture, Nature, was similarily seen as a force to be tamed, reined in and subjugated in the service of the developing urban and industrial needs of a commodity-based society.

Consolidation

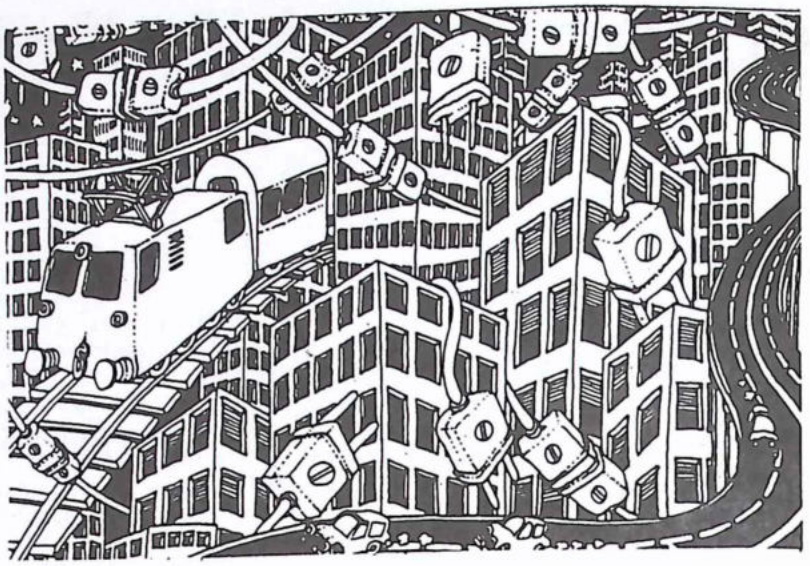
This entire process develops and increases its grip on every aspect of life as capitalism consolidated itself in the late 19th and 20th century. More and more sophisticated techniques of control and surveillance are produced. Military powers and capabilities increase as the nation states of the West exert their control over the rest of the world and fight each other over the plunder. The commodity market becomes globalised through developments in transport and communications. Huge cities emerge while the countryside is turned over to the farming of vast monocultures. All this bears witness to the efforts of bourgeois ideology to establish itself as the single method of social organisation and the single way of understanding the world — as 'civilisation' itself.

However, there are voices, including those of the marginalised 'others' in society, who argue that since World War II we live in an era in which there is a fundamental crisis in this world-view. How sane and rational is a society that produced the genocide of the holocaust and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or that tolerates the mutually assured destruction of the arms race while millions starve? What about the continuing world recession, homelessness and poverty which is provoking social unrest, most recently in the LA riots? Most significantly, don't the ecological threats of deforestation, acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer and the poisoning of our air and water call into question the whole idea of growth and 'progress'? All these factors symbolise a society which is ill at ease with itself, whose claims to have tamed nature for the benefit of all and whose vision of the never-ending march of progress of Western civilisation have been seriously undermined.

Symptoms of the loss of confidence in



a bright future are in evidence all throughout our culture. The *Terminator* films show a vision of the future in which the world and its population have been half-destroyed in a war between humanity and a military technology which has taken on a life of its own, believing itself to be superior to humanity. While the future looks bleak, people turn to the past and the countryside for comfort and reassurance. Home owners 'personalise' their '60s council flats with plastic 'oak beams' and leaded windows. The number of museums has doubled in the last two decades with one opening every two weeks. We even have a minister of 'heritage'.



Autopilot

On the other hand there is capitalism, ever more dependent on fictitious capital. Independent of nation states, it is running on autopilot, oblivious to our human crisis or the threats to the planet and all its life, except, of course, when they can be used as a marketing tool for increasing profits.

How do we, as anarchists, respond to this situation? Obviously proclaiming "the end is nigh!" and thus further encouraging people's pessimism and cynicism about the possibility of real change won't help. We must continue to call for resistance and ultimately a class uprising to overthrow capitalism and then to create a free communist society. But how can we ensure that the same dangerous values and power relationships are not carried over into the new society? How can we persuade others that things won't turn out just the same or worse than before?

We believe the answer lies in listening to the voices of those 'others' that have been marginalised and suppressed by Western civilisation. One of the most useful critiques for this purpose is that developed by some elements of feminism. Many of the ideas already referred to are taken from such feminist thought, some of which has simultaneously developed a critique of the exploitation of women and nature since both are treated in our society as irrational, threatening, in need of taming and objects of exploitation.

As Ynestra King has written, "The hatred of women and the hatred of nature are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing". And as Peggy Kornegger in her essay, *Anarchism: the Feminist Connection* says, "What feminists are dealing with is a mind-fucking process — the male domineering attitude towards the external world, allowing only subject/object relationships. Traditional male politics reduces humans to object status and then dominates and manipulates them for abstract 'goals'. Women, on the other hand, are trying to develop a consciousness of 'other' in all areas. We see subject to subject relationships as not only desirable but necessary. Together we are working to expand our empathy and understanding of living things and to identify with entities outside ourselves, rather than objectifying and manipulating them. At this point, a respect for all life is a prerequisite for our survival".

King, in *Toward an Ecological Feminism and a Feminist Ecology* goes on to explain how the lack of diversity in patriarchal capitalist society is mirrored in the threat to diversity in nature. She writes, "A healthy balanced ecosystem, including human and non-human inhabitants, must maintain diversity...wiping out of whole species corresponds to reducing human diversity into faceless workers or to homogenisation of tastes and culture through mass consumer markets. Social life and natural life are literally simplified to the inorganic for the convenience of the market society. Therefore we need a decentralised global movement founded on common interests but celebrating diversity and opposing all forms of domination and violence".

What we can take from this analysis is a critique of all power relation and of the urge to control and dominate. We can also begin to recognise the importance of diversity and of a harmonious relationship between culture and nature rather than seeing nature as an 'outside' threat to be controlled. These ideas, as well as those from marginalised and suppressed voices, such as those of native peoples, hopefully tell us there is no single unproblematic way of comprehending the world and that a post-revolutionary society would need to respect difference and diversity in culture and nature, encountering and relating, not dominating and exploiting.

This is not simplistically to dismiss every single aspect of Enlightenment thought or to romanticise non-Western cultures and 'woman' as having special access to wisdom and being 'closer to nature'. The point is to have a critical awareness of Enlightenment thought which enables us to see how capitalism makes use of its emphasis on rationality and science to oppress and exploit. But we must not, consequently, leap in an *anti-rational* or *anti-science* direction. Neither would we wish to abandon Enlightenment ideas of the desirability of active human struggle, based upon the criticism and analysis of existing conditions, to bring aboout change.

However, what this analysis of Enlightenment thought and its use by capitalism helps us to do is to focus on how various hierarchical exploitations of class, gender, race and nature are related in the concept of 'other' in Western bourgeois ideology. Consequently, we can see that the idea of exploiting nature is not a neutral concept that can be employed by capitalists and revolutionaries alike, but one which can, and will, be used as a model for the exploitation of others by a ruling elite (capitalist or other) which uses claims to rationality and science to maintain and universalise its hierarchical power.

NEW BOOKSHOP

Our Aberystwyth comrades have started a bookshop.

Open every day from 10am-5pm at:

Stall 9, New Mini-Market, St James Square, Aberystwyth.

When the Sound of the Music Changes, the Walls of the City Shake

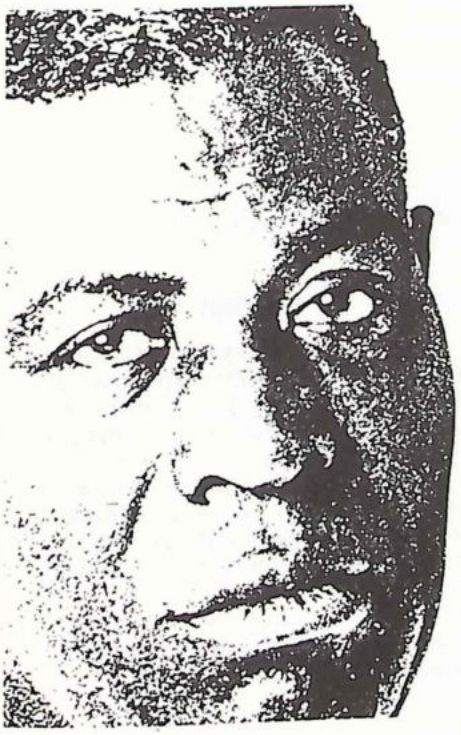
CLASS STRUGGLE PERMEATES every area of social life. It affects what we eat, how we live and determines who we are. It also shapes the music we make and the music we listen to.

In 'natural' society music is created to express emotions, to celebrate, to mourn or to revel in the sheer joy of being alive. In the more 'advanced' societies, music developed different forms — a formalised music which reflected the concerns of the ruling class — the glorification of the monarch and the glorification of the god of the ruling class. Music became formalised, codified and identified with single composers. Performance became ritualised, in contrast to the popular music of ordinary people, which dovetailed with everyday life and events in the lives of ordinary people — festivals, weddings, harvest, births and deaths.

This music drew on the music of previous generations, was not written down, was changed by each person who played it. It evolved anarchically and was played spontaneously in contrast to the formalised rituals that accompanied ruling class music.

Parallel

The two forms of music existed and developed in parallel, each influencing the other. However, their purposes and trajectories were different. Indeed, they could never be similar because they grew from different social forms.



In Britain this divide was sharpened in several ways: by the use of Latin for religious song and by a division of language on a class basis after the Norman Conquest. The division was also highlighted by the kinds of instruments available to the rich as opposed to the simple folk instruments of ordinary people.

Because it wasn't written down and because it didn't glorify people with power, much of this early people's music hasn't survived. From the fragments that remain, we can see that one aspect of popular music was resistance. The early ballads about Robin Hood are an example and the song, 'The Cutty Wren', another.

From the later music of the English Civil War period (the 17th century, when ordinary people thrust their political ideas onto the political stage), we can see that music was used to confirm and celebrate resistance and revolution. **Diggers** like **Gerard Winstanley** composed songs of defiance:

Your houses they pull down.
Stand up now.
As your houses they pull down so the gentry must come down.
Stand up now.
And the poor shall wear the crown.
Stand up now.

The growth in literature and changes in printing technology have resulted in the survival of more songs of resistance from the 18th and 19th centuries than from earlier periods: songs like the 'Colliers' March', 'General Ludd's Triumph' and the 'Chartist Anthem'. If you're interested in hearing them, listen to **Chumbawamba's** record *English Rebel Songs 1381-1914*.

What about our own century and our own music? Does a culture of resistance still exist?

Music has certainly been changed by capitalism, transformed into just another commodity.

Its accessibility as a commodity, through records, CDs, tapes, television and radio has generated a spurious and superficial democracy. Music seems available to all, but even so there remain hierarchies of consumption with people on low incomes given restricted access (varying prices of concert tickets and even if CDs are available in libraries, the equipment costs more).

Technological capitalism has also alienated many people from the production of music and transformed them into consumers of a centrally produced product. Like everything else, entry into the system, making music, requires access to capital.

Of course, people develop strategies to get round the worst effects of capitalism, share and swap instruments, rehearse in garages and so on, but increasing technological sophistication continues to push home-made music into the margins.

The production of music as a commodity has replaced and destroyed much of the music that was based on folk community. The destruction of music has been accelerated by the destruction of community that results from capitalism's transformation of human relationships.

As capitalism causes class struggle by dividing society into classes, and because people are not the passive economic categories that economists would like them to be, they resist, and music reflects and strengthens that resistance. This is why there is a history of songs of resistance, and why every struggle leaves its own legacy of music and songs to inspire.

The vicious class repression that followed the crushing of the **Paris Commune** in 1871 saw strikers and demonstrators shot down in the streets, but also generated an active and assertive anarchist movement. The movement left an arsenal of anarchist songs with titles like 'The Breakers of Images', 'No More Government', 'I don't like the Police' and 'Ravachol's Hymn'.

This was the period when Eugene Pottier, a French woodworker from Lille wrote the 'International'. "We have been naught, we shall be all", those were the sentiments that echoed down the years and appealed to the Chinese students and

young workers in Tiananmen Square who made the chorus of the 'International' their anthem:

'Tis the final conflict
Let each stand in his place
The international party
Shall be the human race.

Resistance

Resistance isn't just expressed in the sentiments of song lyrics, but also in the form of the music. **Jazz,** for example, grew out of an underclass, its free forms and breaking of musical conventions expressing the desire for freedom. Little wonder that jazz was banned in Nazi Germany, its spontaneity an anathema to the totalitarian impulse and its creativity a challenge to the dead hand of fascism and a vibrant refutation of Nazi theories of the cultural inferiority of other races. Hardly suprising that teenage rebels in Germany's anti-fascist resistance identified with jazz and saw it as a symbol of their own rebellion. Nor is it suprising that Czech Stalinists arrested and imprisoned members of the underground 'Jazz Section' or that 'Township Jazz' is one of the most potent forms of cultural opposition to South African apartheid.

What the State cannot successfully ban and forbid, capitalism transforms into a commodity — takes the form, drains it of its rebellious elements, repackages it and sells it back to the people. **George Melly** has written a perceptive account of this process *Revolt into Style*, a book title that neatly summarises the social mechanism that enables capitalism to rejuvenate itself by being parasitical on the creative activity of us all.

Because of this process of recuperation, the transformation of revolt into style, musical radicals need to constantly push back the boundaries of acceptable art, to go outside the experience of capitalism in order to gain the creative space necessary to sustain rebellion.

Frontiers

In our own time the anarchist composer **John Cage** has extended the frontiers of music, by taking the sounds of everyday life and allowing them to intrude into music, as in 'Finnegan's Wake'. Later Cage transformed random everyday sounds into music. In the mistakenly derided (by capitalist hacks and critics) *4'33"* of 1952 he structured silence so that inadvertent sounds within the listener's hearing range are experienced as music. As an anarchist Cage never composed works that required an authoritarian conductor, or even a lead instrumentalist who functions apart from a back-up group.

Avant-garde music like Cage operates on the fringes of daily experience, so although it can extend and transform ideas about music it is difficult for it to reflect the joys and miseries of everyday life. The musical forms that do so most effectively are produced collectively. **Folk** music and punk are two obvious examples. **Punk** music grew out of the desperation experienced by young people during the early years of Thatcherism, and reflects the anger and determination to fight back. Punk's emphasis on raw raucous energy overrode musical niceties. Musical form and structure became subservient to the political message:

We're knocking on your door
We're taking no more
For this is class war.
(The Apostles)

Folk music appears on the surface to be the complete opposite to punk — quiet, reflective and avoiding confrontational posturing, but it shares with punk a dislike of complexity and musical artifice. Like punk, folk requires no expertise. Anyone can get up and do it, but folk music goes beyond punk in the range of emotions it can express and in spite of the fossilised cat crap about nut gathering and the like that is frequently presented as folk music, is far more politicised.

Alex Glasgow's powerful songs explore the suffering that forms the basis of capitalism.

Close the coal-house door, lad, there's blood inside.
Blood from broken hands and feet
Blood that's dried on pit-black meat
Blood from hearts that know no beat
Close the coal-house door, lad, there's blood inside.

While Pete Seeger says straight out:
I hate the capitalist system.

Love

Folk also allows the expression of other revolutionary emotions, like love. English folk singer, **Ewan McColl** wrote the classic 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' and also the ever popular 'Dirty Old Town' which describes how love transforms our perception of our environment, heightens our experience and strengthens us in our daily fight for survival in the teeth of capitalism.

This isn't a Moon/June love song which sells make-up and yoghurt; this is a revolutionary song which empowers people and inspires them to change the world.

The revolution in music takes place on a daily basis as individuals and groups of music-makers take what they like from other musical traditions, add to it, change it, and play it. So the **Kronos Quartet** breaks out of the confines of classical music, playing pieces by **Terry Riley**, **Jimi Hendrix** and fuses with African music as in 'Pieces of Africa'. Rural blues transform into urban blues. **Big Bill Broonzy**, **Howlin' Wolf**, the crackling sounds of old **Leadbelly** recordings and the songs of **Blind Lemon Jefferson** speak across the years, across continents, and across generations, talking about a shared desire for change. What can their national anthems, their 'Blood and Honour' drivel say that matches that?

Stop the City

Speaking personally, one of the most profound moments I've experienced was during a Stop the City demonstration during the early '80s, when in the middle of London, outside the Stock Exchange, hundreds of anarchists under siege from the police suddenly burst into song — a short four-line song which had been distributed at some of the planning meetings:

We're gonna Stop the City
We're gonna Change the World.

And we will, because, as was said of the murdered Chilean singer **Victor Jara**: "You can kill the man but not his song when it's sung the whole world round".

POSTER

Bundles of this poster can be got from London address. Please send a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

Leaflet

London ACF have also produced a small concertina leaflet explaining the basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

Our last lot of six different stickers has now sold out. So we've produced a new series of nine different stickers (anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, ecology etc).

Again, bundles can be obtained from London address, if you enclose donation.

DEAR *ORGANISE!*

Wrong again, I am not a full time official of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM nor ever have been. The Yorkshire Area has only three full time officials. I am none of these. The S. Yorkshire NUM Panel of which I am the Vice CHAIR is an unofficial assembly of NUM branches, and meets once a month, it is not in any way 'fulltime'. It just happens, although I am an elected, part time official of my local branch (the Delegate), I am a rank and file worker. I work on the coal face, and do the normal days, evenings, afters and midnights shift cycle. This is the normal situation for all NUM branch delegates.

Secondly "Having my own column" is not like having your own Rolls you know, it doesn't mark me off as not being a rank and file worker as you seem to imply. In fact I am a supporter of **Class War.** I was offered a column in *Daily Worker*, paper of the reformed **CPGB** because they have made a heavy focus on the developing pit struggle, and wanted the grass roots information as it happened. This was and is done on a non-sectarian basis — it in no way compromises my political views, or theirs for that matter. Their paper is circulated to every pit in Britain, the support groups and throughout the labour movement. It has been a good way of informing the 'movement', my fellow miners and our supporters of what is going on in this area. It is after all a news column. I am not engaging in a polemic or theoretic discussion on the value or non value of the 'party'. If your *Organise!* was published on a daily basis with a similar wide circulation and you unconditionally offered me a column to keep people informed of the rapidly changing and tactically unfolding nature of the pit struggle, I should take it without hesitation.

That would not however mean I had become one of your supporters; neither does it with the **CPGB.** My view of Leninism and Trotskyism is well known.

If you describe yourself as 'anti union', not anti union bureaucrat, but anti union, and if you were to act on that within the class i.e. trying to break the union, getting people to leave the union, or not join the union, sorry comrades whichever way you put it that it would be scabbing, and most certainly be a sign that you were on the wrong side of the class line. I think you do need to radically rethink your position on unions, as you are confusing its progressive, defensive and strategic role in the working class, with its negative, parasitic and often reactionary bureaucracy.

Declining membership in the unions is not some progressive symptom or far from the indication of growing class consciousness you say it is. Declining union membership is almost entirely due to the fact that the industries in which mass 100% membership was a tradition, have been decimated. Heavy industry, coal mining, shipyards, engineering factories, docks, merchant shipping etc. Mass unemployment in areas where unions were a way of life, has almost on its own accounted for the drop in membership. Such new work that has come along has been low paid, part time, in non union services or in get rich quick greenfield sites in areas with no industrial tradition or experience with unions. To some extent, the spread of Thatcherite, individualist, consumerist 'values' has blocked communal, solidarist, collectivist sentiments necessary for the forming of unions or establishment of membership. Add to this the wickedly anti union laws, and employers ever ready to sack you and blacklist you for the rest of your life, and a decline in union membership is hardly surprising is it? This is however neither a sign that workers in general have abandoned unions because they have all embraced Tory values (which is what the Tories say) or that they are becoming more class conscious (which is what you said).

I concede that right wing and moderate unions do piss people off. Single union, no strike deals such as those signed with the Japanese car firms on Wearside and elsewhere produce very small union memberships even in areas of high union traditions. This undoubtedly is because workers can see no point in joining and engage in other forms of struggle at work instead. However this is only a very marginal factor, the main reason is because unions and the working class have been bashed to bits and bashed out of unions, this is not a progressive fact, and is the reason why I reacted so angrily to your 'anti union' advocacy.

By the way on the subject of blacklists. I know my name appears on the lists circulated by **Freedom Association** and **Aims of Industry** etc, but I didn't know **Trotwatch** provided a similar service to the Anarchist left, especially when they get my job, position and politics wrong,

revolutionary greetings,
David Douglass,
National Union of Mineworkers
..and still bloody proud of it.
(Letter slightly edited)

***ORGANISE!* Editors' reply:**

Yes, we were wrong about your position in the union. We based our information on the **Wildcat** pamphlet (reviewed in this issue). However, this does not drastically alter our criticisms of your role within anarchist circles, that is, to defend trade unionism, at a time when some, perhaps many anarchists are breaking with it. Nor does your espousal of libertarian politics and indeed a public denunciation of Leninism excuse your writing a column in the *Daily Worker*. If anything it makes it doubly damning. The Communist Party of Great Britain proudly defends Bolshevism. No conscious libertarian revolutionary can contribute a column to its paper without seriously compromising themselves. The **CPGB** will use people like you to gain credibility in miners' circles and recruit among them. So on one hand you lambast Leninism, whilst on the other you give them succour by writing in their publications.

No, we never said that the decline in union membership was due to rising class consciousness. Read our reply to your last letter again. Of course some of the falling membership is due to rising unemployment. But as we said, many are not joining unions or failing to renew membership because they see that the unions *are not defending their interests* and indeed are opposed to their interests. No, we are not scabs. In our book that means any one who betrays class solidarity. We have never done this. Cut out the abuse and the crap about being on the wrong side of the class line. The unions are betraying the workers, even the sacred NUM, and as events unfold over the next period of struggle, we will soon see who is on the wrong side of the class line.

***TROTWATCH* adds:**

It would have been better if the 'credit' published at the end of the article in the last *Organise!* had been the one we suggested — "Thanks to Trotwatch for information on the Leninist/Daily Worker" rather than the one that got printed — "Thanks to Trotwatch for information on Dave Douglass". When we heard *Organise!* was publishing a debate between the ACF and DD on the union question, we sent in a copy of one of DD's regular columns from the *Daily Worker* with some comments of our own about the issues raised by DD's support for Class War, his role as contact for 'Class War Colliers' and his role as columnist for a Leninist party newspaper. We sent no other information about DD's job or his position in the NUM.

The suggestion that Trotwatch helps in some way in the compiling of 'blacklists' of socialists is complete nonsense. Trotwatch is an "anarchist commentary on the life of the left", our purpose is to publish critiques of contemporary leftist ideas and practice, from a revolutionary communist perspective. Sometimes our jokes are quite funny as well. We have not publicised any information about the political affiliations of individuals involved with leftist organisations that was not already in the

'public arena'. We never offer any information to anyone, other than anarchist-communist comrades we already know and trust. Our only sources of information about the activities of the left (thus far) have come from the pages of the published left press.

What 'confidential' information does DD believe Trotwatch has disclosed via *Organise!*? DD has written signed pieces in the *Heavy Stuff*, and his column in the *Daily Worker* includes both his name — and a photograph. If DD and Trotwatch decide to pursue the issues raised here, we will publish our debate in the next edition of Trotwatch out in the autumn.

DEAR COMRADES,

Unfortunately I have not seen the recent articles upon the recession which may or may not have similar perspectives as mine. The articles upon the 'New World Disorder' left much unsaid. What was not absolutely explicit was that it appears that capital has *no way out of its current crisis*. Capital needs to grow, to accumulate, but it seems that all its avenues of growth have now been explored and exhausted. It has created and filled its markets world-wide for its commodities, its means of producing these commodities, and finally its credit (its fictional capital). It has reaped profit from its welfare society, its deficit spending, its exploitation of cheap raw materials, by dumping commodities in the poor world, by exploiting cheap labour there, by selling arms the world over (even to the poorest and most vulnerable) by creating new technologies and so new toys for consumers, by hawking credit, financial services and investment to the poor world.

But where is capital continuing to grow now? Unemployment is rising world-wide — not only in the sick areas of Europe and America, in the previously cast-iron economy of Japan, but in the poor world, particularly Africa, we are witnessing levels of poverty and degradation which are indescribable. The attempts to restart the world economy by reviving world trade through the **GATT** talks are becoming ever more drawn out. Indeed there is

continuing talk of trade war as three new capitalist blocs crystallise — Bush began it, Clinton seems to be continuing it, over steel, aircraft, cars and more. We must wait and see particularly how the two most intransigent players in this dangerous game, France and the USA continue the brinkmanship. Even though Clinton has taken the helm, American capital continues to sink further into its own degeneration — the Rust Belt is still rusting, the Sun Belt continues to undermine the previous centres of US capital. The only area of US strength though is its military — but US capital cannot cure its ills by simply policing or bullying the rest of the world.

After the passing of the Russian bloc and the spectre of so-called communism, the Western world has turned to a variety of ideologies to motivate and explain its actions. We have witnessed both the promotion and death of democracy — in Russia and Italy respectively. We are seeing the rise of a variety of nationalisms: the extreme right in Germany; Serbian, Croatian and others in what was Yugoslavia; America First in the USA; the various nationalisms of the breakup of the USSR. A variety of humanitarianisms are being promoted, for instance the Somalia adventure of the USA, whereas Angola and Mozambique are being treated to US/South African sponsored insurgents.

Here in Britain we are promised national recovery and we are given a budget supposedly to provide it. Our beloved 'man in grey' even has to promote the idea on TV to help us swallow the idea even though we have the inkling that all is not well: rising unemployment, in reality over four million; wages held down, public sector wages pegged to 1.5%; continued attacks on the poor, VAT extended to fuel, to be only 50% compensated. Capital can only increase its exploitation of the working clas as it scrambles for answers to the crisis of the boss class. I can see no answer to the crisis, nor can anyone else — a new Keynesianism won't work, as has been mooted even by Japanese economists, nor will a new and improved monetarism. The other classical route out of such crises is war. Both world wars and various 'police actions' have come to the aid of capitalism in the past but this seems not to be an option now — the level of destruction required would be too great. Barbarism, of one form or the other, seems the only future.

Barbarism or the revolutionary transformation of society are usually counterposed as alternatives. I believe this to be the case now, although these alternatives are not being voiced generally or even in part by working class. I do feel that the class struggle will necessarily intensify over the coming years as capital continues to fail to deal with its own degeneration.

This may seem to be an odd perspective to be held by a libertarian communist, but this seems to be the only logical analysis of current trends. But there is one task which must be undertaken, framing means by which revolutionaries can usefully engage in what must be a coming expansion of the class struggle. In this engagement we will have to negate all of those tendencies towards social democracy which have infested the working class — the unions, the Labour Party, the pseudo-revolutionary Trotskyists who are ready to bury class consciousness and class struggle in dogma and substitutionism. It will be our task to aid the class as it struggles, hopefully moving from class consciousness to revolutionary consciousness.

We face considerable obstacles, though, the working class is hardly at its most combative. It will not simply be a question of turning up wherever we can but of carefully considered action, intervention, which will raise the profile of the revolutionary idea and give the class confidence in its own capacity to act and create. We will have to relate ourselves to the interests of the working class as they develop, to aid and inform as much as we can. More than anything else we will have to negate every possible destructive influence we can — nationalism, social democracy etc.

It may not be apparent to everyone, but the time is coming,

yours, libertarian communist greetings,
J.C. (Sheffield)

DEAR *ORGANISE!*

Ta for *Organise!* 28. A good issue. I especially liked 'Reading the Detectives'. Not so sure about 'Against Exploitation' article. In particular the sentence.."anarchist-communists find no room for such objectivity". To base our politics instead on morality puts us on very shaky ground. We have to explain ourselves when we use 'morally unjust' otherwise we come across as liberals.

K. (Vancouver, Canada)

BLACK MASK & UP AGAINST THE WALL MOTHERFUCKER. 144 pages. Unpopular Books and Sabotage Editions. (No price given on review copy). Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Rd, London E8 2NS.

This book is a collection of articles published in the two magazines mentioned in the title. *Black Mask* was created by the **New York Surrealist Group** and the **New York Anarchist Group** and appeared from 1966 to 1968. As such, it was a portent of the revolutionary storm to come in 1968, plugging in equally to the riots of poor blacks in Watts, the anti-Vietnam War resistance, and the flowering hippy counter-culture. It was aware of other developments throughout the world like the French Situationists and the English Heatwave group. Indeed in many ways it echoed the development of the French Situationists in that a revolutionary critique of Art developed into a revolutionary critique of society as a whole.

Up Against the Wall Motherfucker was a continuation of the *Black Mask*, with a mixing of the most combative of the counter-culture with the previous political developments. Unfortunately the concentration on dope and acid, a symptom of the times, seems to have affected the form and content of the Motherfuckers' political statements. Long, shapeless rants praise the 'Hip Community' and Ying-Yang symbols are dotted throughout. We have such statements as the "hip tribal nation forms as the eventual replacement of amerikan all-goverment". Illusions in the counter-culture as a means to both fight and replace the capitalist set-up marginalise the Motherfuckers. The earlier *Black Mask* articles about the Newark and Detroit riots, the discussions on art, sexuality, the youth revolt are far more interesting and coherent. The book lets the two groups speak for themselves through their articles and leaflets. However, a little more information about how the groups formed, and what happened to them would have been appreciated.

REFRACTED PERSPECTIVE. The Left, Working Class Trade Unionism and The Miners. Dave Douglass. 60p. 12 pages.
OUTSIDE AND AGAINST THE UNIONS. A communist response to Dave Douglass' text. Wildcat. 40p. 15 pages.

The first pamphlet was a text delivered to **Class War's** International Conference in 1991. It claims to address the Socialist Workers Party, orthodox Trotskyists, and "elements of the situationists". As the **Wildcat** pamphlet points out, its purpose was to "stifle criticism of trade unionism in and around the anarchist movement". Much of Douglass's pamphlet is taken up with justified criticisms of the Leninist vanguards, and he does criticise the NUM bureaucrats including King Arthur. He defends mass pickets and hitsquads against the criticisms of the Left. However he tries to amalgamate Leninists with 'situationists', that is, as **Wildcat** says "a code word for class struggle militants who are against the unions from a communist point of view". He makes out Leninists are anti-union, when they are great supporters of unionism. Many Leninist militants keep union branches going, as **Wildcat** wittily remarks: "the Leninist intellectuals of and by themselves can only achieve a trade union consciousness".

Douglass implies trade unions are somehow the property of workers: "Can you wonder that industrial and unionised workers identify more with their Trade Union branch, lodge, shop stewards committee or whatever than they do with the revolutionary donkey constructed out of somebody's Book of Revolutionary Organisation". Douglass uses a valid attack on vanguardism to disguise his defence of unions. The unions he cites appear to lack union bureaucracies, operating as networks of independent local branches. Using the classic line spouted by any trade union leftist, he says that if members were to mobilise they could determine policies. **Wildcat** points out that the 1977 productivity deal, which divided miners between regions, engineered by 'workers' friend' Tony Benn, was pushed through by the NUM executive *despite* a national ballot rejecting it. In 1983 NUM leaders ignored an 80% strike vote in South Wales. In April 1984 Lancashire leaders held an area delegate meeting to send Lancashire miners back to work. 30 miners then occupied Bolton HQ.

Douglass makes out that support of the unions is better than support of the Leninist parties because the latter has more loyalty from the class. If we followed this logic, then support for the Labour Party or a love of royalty should also be uncritically supported.

As **Wildcat** point out, unions are *not* workers' self-defence organisations but structures to negotiate the rate of exploitation by the bosses of the workers. Negotiation is not just an economic activity, it is a political one — is a form of political representation. Representing people is not about fighting for their interests. It is about maintaining the loyalty of a passive 'constituency' **Wildcat** point out the NUM differs from other British trade unions in being radical and left-wing. This is because of the existence of a militant rank and file. The rhetoric of officials protects them and helps them keep control. But many of the most important strikes among miners were unofficial, or started out as such.

The debate on the unions will continue, of this we are sure. Revolutionary anarchists need to take a long hard look at the hand of trade unionism with its weakening grip on both the class and revolutionary militants. So read these two pamphlets and see whether the struggle should be inside the unions or 'outside and against' them.

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process.

We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Why we still need a national revolutionary organisation

THE ANARCHIST Communist Federation has consistently argued the need for a national revolutionary organisation in this country. We continue to stand by this argument.

We have always opposed the localist and parochial ideas that have been argued for within anarchist circles. We know that attempts to set up local and regional networks, if they are not tied to the need for national organisation and consistent revolutionary theory, are doomed to failure. We are all for the establishment of local coordinations that enable revolutionaries to pool their efforts and resources. However, if these are put forward as the solution to the present lack of progress of libertarian revolutionaries, and indeed if these are actively counterposed to the establishment of a national revolutionary anarchist organisation, we must argue that they are no substitute for the building of such a body. The Class Struggle Anarchist Network and many local Solidarity Groups have all collapsed. The attempt to establish borough-wide coordinations in London in 1992 was more or less still-born.

All round Britain revolutionaries share similar positions to ours. We urge them to consider joining the ACF. We have survived the present bad times because of our devotion to the need for a revolutionary organisation and because we have valued the development of theory alongside an outgoing practice. Now there are possibilities in the coming few years if the signs of increased militancy in the working class (at Fords, the firefighters, the railworkers and the miners) herald a new willingness to struggle. We need to be there to put over our ideas of self-organisation, and the more of us united in one body the better.

The war in ex-Yugoslavia, the strife in Russia, the millions of unemployed in the West, the famine and wars in Africa, the deepening ecological problems, are all signs that a world social system, capitalism, cannot deliver the goods and endangers us all. Unlike many, we are not prepared to give in to pessimism and nihilism. We know that things can and will change for the better if new social movements can be galvanised into action. If you feel the same, then have a good think about joining the ACF and help create a new society based on social justice, ecological harmony and equality.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE WHOLE DEBATE about crime is hopelessly confused and confusing. One thing is certain, in the population at large, there is a fear of crime which politicians, especially the Tories but increasingly Labour, are exploiting for political gain. There is an ever growing demand by reactionaries of all kinds to "get tough with crime". It is an easy slogan to make which guarantees attention but, despite a dozen years of authoritarian Tory control, crime is nowhere near to being defeated. Why is this?

In capitalist society, what crimes actually are is determined by the state. They may, or may not, coincide with what working class people think is wrong behaviour. People 'living' on social security benefits cannot survive on what is available to them. They have either to get involved with some form of 'criminal' behaviour, whether this means social security fraud, shoplifting or worse. And most working class people who have jobs ask few questions when offered goods which have 'fallen off the back of a lorry'.

Their attitudes change when they become the victims of crime. It is an unfortunate fact that some working class people are quite happy to steal from or abuse their own kind. Stealing television sets and videos on council estates or racial or sexual attacks are examples of criminal behaviour which is not acceptable to the working class.

Does this mean that there is a double standard operating here? Not at all. The point about crime is that it must be seen in class terms. Crime is defined and combatted largely by the state acting in the interests of maintaining their order and protecting property. The maintenance of order is presented as being in the interests of all classes but in reality provides stability for the promotion of capitalism. Capitalism itself is based upon a form of robbery: exploitation. But this is not defined by the state as crime. Similarily, we all have personal property to protect but the state is mainly concerned with the protection of private property, ie the instruments of legal robbery — the banks, factories, shops etc. Working class people are generally aware of this. It is a commonplace to hear that there exists "one law for the rich and another for the poor".

So far, from an anarchist communist standpoint, we must be skeptical, to say the least, about the whole debate about crime. We are clear about one thing; anti-social crime, meaning anything which oppresses, robs or does violence to the working class, must be opposed. We cannot wait until 'after the revolution' to fight the active enemies of the people. Racist attacks, sexual assaults, muggings are not acceptable and we have to find solutions to these problems here and now. This will mean vigilence and self-defense by the affected communities. Middle class crimes and assaults on the working class by asset strippers and speculators, though often invisible, are also insidious and must be opposed collectively, where possible, in this long dark night of capitalism. Interestingly, their activities are not often seen by the state as crimes at all, or if they are, they carry relatively light punishments.

Anti-social acts are a direct expression of predatory capitalism. Selfishness, bullying, violence and legalised robbery are all inherent in the system. The tentacles of class society and its ethics have entered into every part of life. It is not accidental that men are responsible for most crimes and that women hardly figure in the crime statistics. Men are socialised from birth to be aggressive, violent, hard and tough, whilst women are socialised to be submissive and caring. This sort of upbringing does untold psychological violence to boys as they are shaped by their parents and society to struggle and fight.

Add to this a strict and regimenting school system, a future of unemployment or dead-end jobs together with boredom and you have a mixture which invites trouble. This is not to excuse macho behaviour but is an attempt to place it in perspective. Crime and capitalism are inseparable.

If crime is a part of capitalist society, what will happen in an anarchist communist society? Anarchist communism is based upon the principles of a classless society in which freedom arises out of community solidarity and an enlightened system of socialisation and education. Private property will be abolished and the goal of production will be for the fulfilment of human need, not the accumulation of private wealth. Goods and services will be planned by the active communities working with similar communities elsewhere. The individual will be encouraged to take part in decision-making. In this way, goods and services will be provided to meet everyone's needs, so far as this is possible. Also, many services will be provided by the community just as public libraries are today, so that entertainment, transport etc will be on the basis of free access.

Moneyless

Communism requires the abolition of money and exploitation. With a moneyless society there will be no possibility to accumulate wealth beyond that which a person can possibly hold on to. Since goods are free, there will be little point in stealing and therefore most, if not all, crimes against property will disappear.

In a caring society which will do away with the desperate struggle for everyday survival, many of the material bases of want will disappear. The revolution will consciously want to eliminate anti-social behaviour and so education and the socialisation of children will be directed towards tolerance, equality and sharing. Violence, which is an ever present undercurrent of life today, will be discouraged through the development of cooperative play and education. The current obsession with aggressive individualism combined with glorification of male assertiveness probably accounts for much of male violence, especially among younger people. Whilst individualism as a means of achieving personal fullfilment is to be encouraged, it must be done so in a positive way. Gain for the individual is a gain for society as a whole. The point of anarchist communism is not to stifle individual effort but to channel it in constructive directions.

In present day society, most people are cut off from their neighbours. Very few real communities survive and those that do are deeply imbued with the values of capitalist society. In an anarchist communist society, community and solidarity will bind society together.

Despite education and other means of socialisation there will be isolated acts of violence, sexual assaults and other anti-social behaviour. Many of these will be carried out by people who are emotionally disturbed. The community has a right to protect itself and steps will have to be taken to eliminate violent and other destructive behaviour. Such people should be cared for as far as possible within the community. This approach has nothing in common with the current dumping of the mentally disturbed onto the streets. In 'face to face' communities everyone will recognise their neighbours and take on a collective and individual responsibility for social care and control. Psychiatric and medical help will be aimed at the integration of disturbed individuals and the promotion of their welfare. There are no easy solutions to some disturbed and obsessive behaviour such as sexual assaults, arson etc. But the approach to such problems will have to be approached in an enlightened, not a punitive way.

This leads us to a discussion of punishment. Punishment, the infliction of violence for so-called crimes, has been a feature of virtually every society from the earliest recorded history. The *Old Testament* approach to punishment in which not only the 'guilty' are harmed but also their relatives and descendents is to be found in many societies. Aspects of this approach have come down to us today in Islamic law and in the Tory government's initiative in blaming and punishing parents for their children's crimes.

There are several justifications given for punishment, all of which are seriously flawed. Revenge is the most primitive, being based on the desire to 'get even' with the criminal. The 'retributive' approach starts from the assumption that individual crimes deserve punishment; murderers deserve to be executed, rapists deserve castration. Apart from the problem of gauging what is an appropriate punishment for each and every crime in a whole range of circumstances, this approach assumes that one act of inflicting pain (robbery, assault etc) is to be condemned whilst another, that of punishment (which might be equally brutal eg stoning of adulterers) is fine. It also accepts that a higher authority, ie the state, has the right alone to inflict punishment.

Linked to the vengeance justification for punishment is the idea of deterrence. Indeed, the two are usually cited together in determining a 'suitable' punishment in the courts. The idea that criminal behaviour will be reduced by the threat of punishment on being caught does not stand up. Firstly, many serious crimes take place on the spur of the moment when people lose self-control through anger, jealousy or drugs. There is no thought of the consequences of such acts.

Secondly, premeditated criminal acts are not deterred by the thought of an eventual punishment. What concerns criminals is the likelihood of getting caught. If such an event seems on balance to be possible, the proposed crime is aborted. A few hundred years ago pick-pockets were executed at public hangings. Active among the enthralled crowds were professional pick-pockets! So much for deterrence.

The idea that society will be better off by carrying out punishments misses the point. An unequal, unfair society creates its own criminality. What needs to be eliminated is the social and economic base for crime. Similarily, the idea of reforming criminals within the prison system is a sick joke. There is precious little enlightenment in Britain's repressive prison regime. In modern Britain, it is not the criminals that need to be 'reformed' but society itself, which needs to be changed, lock, stock and barrel.

T/SOR/16/13

ORGANISE!

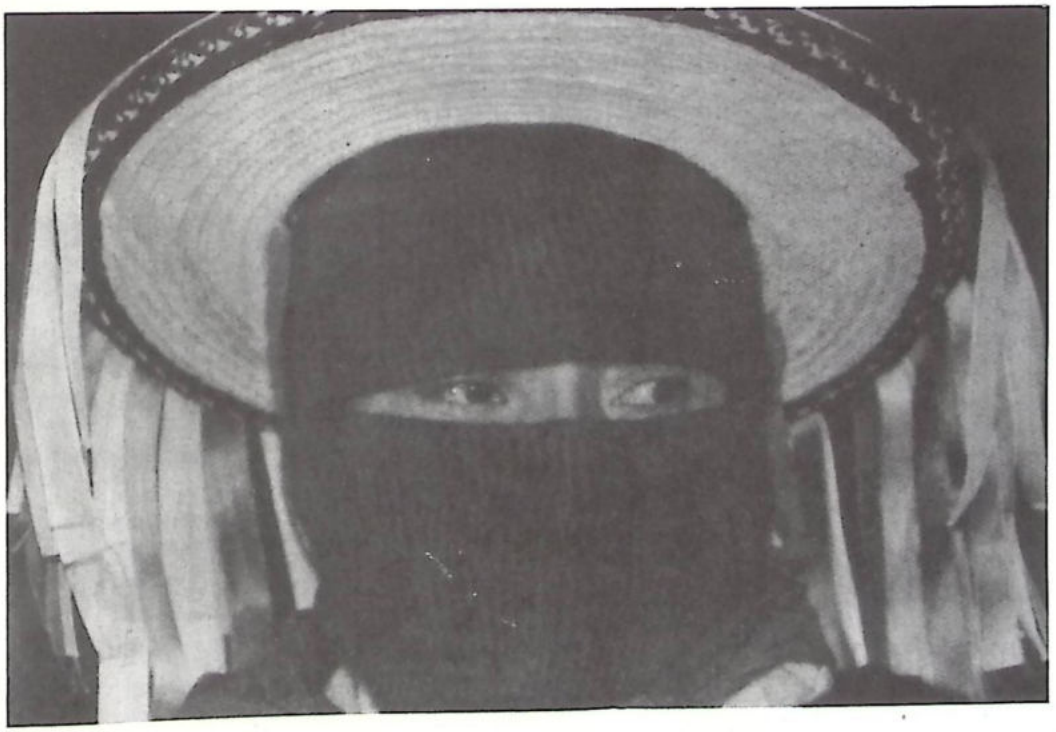
for class struggle anarchism

50p
April-Jun
1994
Issue 34

1910 — Viva Zapata!

First time tragedy,

1994 — Viva Zapata!



Second time . . ?

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Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 4th June for features and reviews, and 11th June for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
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NOW IS A difficult time to be asking for money, with many out of work or wondering if they're going to get the chop. Cash is in short supply.

But *Organise!* desperately needs money to continue to appear and to improve. We need money for our projected pamphlets, for the stickers and posters and leaflets we intend to produce.

So we are asking you, dear reader, to think about sending something in, no matter how small, to help us continue the fight for anarchist communism. We know that many of you value the ideas presented in *Organise!* So please help us by sending in POs, IMOs, or cash. You can even send us a standing order to our account to support *Organise!* more regularly. Write to the London address for account details. Dig into your pockets now! Thanks to all those who contributed to the Press Fund this issue:
£100, East London; £80, Sheffield; £5, Nottingham.

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Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Organise! Back Issues

BACK ISSUES of *Organise!* (from issues 14 to 28) are still available from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 20p & sae each:

- *Organise!* 25: SOLD OUT
- *Organise!* 26: Women & Revolution; Direct action; US Greens
- *Organise!* 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
- *Organise!* 28: ERM; Recession; Detective Fiction
- *Organise!* 29: Debate on the Unions; Italian Workers Fight Back
- *Organise!* 30: SOLD OUT
- *Organise!* 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural Laws
- *Organise!* 32: SOLD OUT
- *Organise!* 33: Criminal Justice; Battle of Wanstead; *Bad Attitude*; Abortion.

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. We have members and groups in the following areas:

ENGLAND
Midlands: Aylesbury, Birmingham, Chesterfield, Coventry, Nottingham, Saffron Walden, Worcester.
North East: Blyth, Chester-le-Street, Gateshead, Newcastle.
North West: Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Ulveston.
South East: Brighton, Canterbury, London (East, North, West), Portsmouth, Twickenham, Woking.
South West: Buckfastleigh, Exeter.

NORTHERN IRELAND
Portrush, Warrenpoint.

SCOTLAND
Aberdeen, Glasgow.

WALES
Lampeter, Pontypool.

Contact ACF (No other mention) PO BOX 4, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 OYZ.

Tower Hamlets: The Electoral Charade

AGAINST A background of ever more brazen and brutal racial attacks combined with far-right electoral success in an increasingly xenophobic "Fortress Europe", fears are mounting in the UK that at the forthcoming May elections the British National Party will be able to repeat its success of last year in winning its first council seat on the Isle of Dogs in the Tower Hamlets borough of London.

Above: Aryan supermen celebrate victory of the "master race" in Millwall.

The three main parties blamed each other for the BNP's first electoral victory (while at the same time virtually everyone scapegoated white working class voters, as though the mainstream parties could abnegate their own responsibilities for the social mess at both local and national levels). Jack Straw of the Labour Party, in particular, unhesitantly blamed the ruling Liberal Democrats for stoking up racism in their election run-up campaign. Meanwhile, Labour councillors in the borough and the candidate, James Hunt, lost no time in spouting forth sanctimonious drivel about their own "Mr Clean" record.

In fact racism, institutionalised by the British political system, has a long history in Tower Hamlets, and did not mysteriously evaporate away when the Liberal Democrats took control of the council in 1986 — if anything they carried on the tradition of discrimination previously perpetuated by Labour. At the time the BNP won its council seat last year, for example, one of the Liberal Democrats' campaign leaflets was shamelessly proclaiming a "Bangladeshi shocker", urging voters not to vote Labour which had apparently squandered money on aid to victims of the Bangladeshi flood. There is a frequent emphasis on the rights of local people to have a council house in their "own community", local people first, and so on. It may sound benign, but it adds to the already poisonous atmosphere created by Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Tories.

Counterbalance

As a counterbalance to all the vacuous rhetoric, particularly from Labour, we reproduce below some extracts from an independent report commissioned by the Labour-run Greater London Council after complaints of racism in housing allocation from the community group, Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Services (SHPRS). The report was researched by Deborah Phillips who as "an independent researcher was able to observe GLC housing management practices at close hand and to make daily contact with housing staff".

During the investigation, the researcher found: "OVERT RACISM; a disturbing level of racist comment and joking was witnessed by the researcher. Bengalis in particular were stereotyped as dirty, troublemakers and causing problems on estates, although social security tenants were often characterised in similar ways. Several officers who independently expressed personal views on Tower Hamlets' racial and housing problems offered remarkably similar solutions, that is, to put all Bengalis together in E1 and allocate them to poorer estates, their view was that they would turn them into slums anyway." (p43).

"The overall effect of the allocation process has been to direct Asians towards some of the more popular and newer white estates. . ." (p15).

"SHPRS's criticisms over 1982-1984 period have focussed on the GLC's management of Bengali access to and distribution in E1. In particular the group alleged that Bengalis were not getting their fair share on the "better" estates in the area. The pattern (ie distribution of offers etc) supports the findings reported in the preceding paragraphs and confirms SHPRS's allegations that Bengalis were more likely to be given a narrow range of offers on poorer estates. . . In particular it seems remarkable none of the 12, three bedroom vacancies on Exmouth was offered to Asians, especially given their very high demand for this size of accommodation."

An internal memo justified the council's role: "difficulties which result from housing families who enjoy a different social and culinary style in blocks with internal access where the aroma of more savoury cooking tends to permeate the immediate areas."

It should also be noted that the idea for an independent report was first considered and rejected in 1982.

It was Labour who laid the foundations for racism to thrive in Tower Hamlets, until the Liberal Democrats took control of the council in 1986. In that light, the self-righteous bleating of the borough's Labour councillors — "we joined the party because of its anti-racist policies" — must seem pathetically hollow.

So whom should you be voting for in the May elections? Perhaps it looks like a choice between the least of three evils? There must, after all, be some decent people in the Labour Party, musn't there? There may be, but they're not going to change anything. And they're certainly not going to change the way that people — the electorate — think. Vacuous rhetoric from politicians, inconsistent with their actual practices, is clearly recog-

nised for what it is. We need positive grass roots action, starting with a clear recognition of the charade of "democracy" and an abstention from the May elections, and in the second place, a concerted campaign of getting across to people a clear understanding of who is responsible for poor and scarce housing, failing social services, a deteriorating education system and the grinding poverty of the most vulnerable sections of the working class.

It's not the Bangladeshis to blame, nor the Somalis, nor any group identified along racial lines. The "us" and "them" must be clearly identified for who they are: as the working class people of this country, irrespective of race, and the politicians of all parties who, in seeking to divide us from each other, hope to draw attention away from their own self-seeking and socially reprehensible policies in the service of capitalism.

REFERENCES: 1 *Bengalis and GLC Housing Allocations in E1*, Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Services, 1982.
2 *Bengalis and GLC Allocations in E1 — an Update*, Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Services, 1984.
3 GLC Housing Research and Policy Report No. 9 *What Price Equality* (c.1986).

NATFHE sabotage

THE LOCAL FURTHER Education (FE) colleges provide post-16 education, often mainly vocational, for large numbers of working class people.

There are next to no jobs for school-leavers and to avoid the prospect of gangs of bored, penniless youths on the streets, the government has been using FE colleges to mop them up. By and large, it is a cynical exercise as there are few jobs, even after training. It is seen by the State as a partial solution, keeping otherwise dangerous youth under institutional control.

Being set up for mainly working class students, the FE colleges aren't too concerned with the quality of what is provided, though their propaganda argues the contrary. Cost effectiveness, meaning squeezing more and more people into fewer colleges is presented as the inevitable way forward. Colleges are required to increase student numbers by 25% in three years and compete vigorously with each other for "bums on seats". Those who don't attract the students will go under as colleges are now more or less in a state of open warfare with each other.

To survive, college managements have been restructured and confrontational tactics are being employed to cower the workforce. Part of this bullying process, aimed at achieving total submissiveness by college lecturers, is the imposition of new employment conditions. Collective bargaining has been abandoned, and there will be a large increase in lecturers' hours, bigger classes and a cut in holidays of seven weeks per year. As if this wasn't enough, colleges are busy replacing full-time lecturers with much cheaper part-timers.

So, given all of this, you might have expected the main lecturers' union NATFHE to put up a vigorous fight — after all, a major attack has been launched against their members. In fact, the union response could be described as treacherous, if we accepted that it had ever actually been on the lecturers' side in the first place, which we do not. A one day strike took place last year which was successful, as far as it went. Then, following further negotiations with employers, NATFHE heroically offered to meet them halfway. They decided, without consulting members, to give up several weeks holidays and lengthen the working week!

A second strike was called for March 1st this year, as the employers, scenting blood, demanded total surrender. Under the stirring slogan "No Substandard Contracts Here" the union negotiators got a favourable result for strike action in a postal ballot.

Unfortunately for NATFHE, the management of Blackpool College challenged the legality of the proposed strike. The court ruled that the strike was indeed unlawful, since NATFHE had failed to give the employers the names of every member participating in the ballot. The judge said that for the result to be lawful, the union should have provided the employers with impossibly accurate membership lists. In effect, this judgement virtually bans all official union strikes.

Given this judgement, you might have expected an intensification of the struggle, or the ignoring of the judge's decision. Not so. Immediate and desperate capitulation was the order of the day. A union letter demanded that under no circumstances should NATFHE assets be threatened, and no one should place the union at risk.

Only three FE colleges disobeyed the union's directive and went on strike on March 1st. Would-be strikers in other colleges were stunned into paralysis by the court's decision, though misplaced loyalty to the union was another factor. Tower Hamlets College, which did strike, was rewarded a week or so later by students who struck for the day in support of lecturers.

Distressing

Loyal NATFHE members are now somewhat demoralised and unsure of the way forward. Union representatives have been busy trying to draw up accurate membership lists, indicating complete compliance by the leadership with legalism at all costs.

A further distressing feature of the dispute is the way various Marxist-Leninist groups have been using the union to increase their influence in the working class. The Maoist Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) controls the leadership and the Socialist Workers Party is intent on displacing it. The Maoists have been pursuing a long-term policy of extreme moderation to maintain their grip. This is reminiscent of the Communist Party of Great Britain's strategy of capturing top union positions. In the end, the infiltrators are captured by the unions. The SWP, in the meantime, is making militant sounding noises to unseat their Maoist rivals.

The situation is a complete mess. The dispute will probably end up for the lecturers as the biggest massacre since Little Big Horn. It is clear to save the situation, lecturers will have to embark on a course of wildcat strikes, outside and against the union. Three colleges have already shown the way forward and their example has to be followed if the lecturers want to maintain their conditions.

Squat! Don't Rot!

ARTILLERY MANSIONS is a good example of what we anarchists call propaganda by the deed. That is through direct action showing how people can start gaining control of their lives. We hope that more and more homeless people will take action and occupy the large numbers of empty buildings, offices, flats and hotels, that have lain empty for many years. The homeless problem could be solved at one fell swoop. There is enough property to house the homeless many times over. The estate agents and property developers prefer to put profit before people.

Anarchist militants have consistently advocated and taken part in occupations of empty property.

Georges Cochon, anarchist and upholstery worker organised the Union syndicale des locataires (Union of lodgers) in 1911 in Paris. He was to initiate the first mass urban squatting movement. Up to 15,000 people took part in the occupations of large buildings. Even the model homes put up during an Ideal Home style exhibition, the Salon de l'habitat, were squatted!

In 1945 in Britain large numbers of homeless people occupied empty properties, and in 1969 a group of anarchists and libertarian socialists initiated a squatting movement in East London that spread throughout Britain.

As a result many people took over empty property over the last 25 years. The movement needs to be re-activated accompanied by mass propaganda pointing out the obscenity of the vast number of properties lying empty.

Artillery Mansions Fires off a Broadside for the Homeless!

ARTILLERY MANSIONS IS a huge Victorian building on the main thoroughfare of Victoria Street in London. It has recently been occupied by homeless people. *Organise!* interviewed one of the activists in the occupation.

***Organise!:* How long has the squat been here at Artillery Mansions?**
AM: Three weeks.

***Organise!:* And how many people are installed here now?**
AM: Over 100.

***Organise!:* It's all people off the streets, isn't it?**
AM: Mostly people off the streets, rough sleepers and some people evicted from other squats.

***Organise!:* The squat was instigated by the Freedom Network. Who are they?**
AM: It's made up of the activist members of SQUASH (Squatters Action for Secure Homes), Green Committee 100 and some Earth First! people.

***Organise!:* How long do you hope to be in here?**
AM: We're going to court on the 17th. We're pretty certain that it's going to be a possession forthwith, it's just a matter of how long it takes the bailiffs to come round. We have sent letters to the solicitors saying that we know that most of the building is to be left empty because they intend to turn it into offices and the property market is not good enough to support that at the moment, so they intend to leave it empty as they have done for the last eighteen years. A few of the flats here were occupied right up to 1990, but the majority have remained empty for eighteen years or more.

***Organise!:* In the media it said that this was being done specifically against the Criminal Justice Bill. Is that correct?**
AM: There are three things. Firstly, it was a protest against the Criminal Justice Bill. Secondly, it was a protest against Westminster City Council's jerrymandering — unlawful and improper use of their powers. Thirdly, it was to run an alternative rough sleepers initiative, which is to get people off the streets and put them into a flat.

***Organise!:* Are more and more rough sleepers coming off the street when they hear about it?**
AM: Yes. It's starting to fill up a bit more.

***Organise!:* When protesters first started, were many rough sleepers ready to move in straight away?**
AM: Yes, we invited a few in and then we decided to have fliers to hand out to rough sleepers. What actually happened was that the influx was enough for what we could cope with, so we didn't end up giving out the fliers. We were taking in about five rough sleepers a day.

Grapevine

***Organise!:* You mean that people heard about it through the grapevine?**
AM: Yes and people on their way to the building to see people.

***Organise!:* If you are evicted from here, do you hope to carry out similar actions in other large buildings to highlight what is going on?**
AM: Yes. This is taking a hell of a lot of work. There is a responsibility here not only to the rough sleepers who come in. We've got under age people coming in, we've got people with mental health problems coming in and people with alcoholic problems. Then we've got kids coming in and make a mess, like the chimney pots being broken, so we have to make sure that they keep out. We have a responsibility to the five tenants in the back block who are old people waiting to be moved for the last eleven years, with braces hanging off and their pants undone, not knowing what is going on. They are littered throughout the back block, each one on a floor where every other flat on their floor is boarded up and it stinks of pigeon shit as well. They are still stuck in there waiting to be moved on because they have secure tenancies, which means that they have a right to another place. So we have a responsibility to them and we have a responsibility to the locality.

***Organise!:* Is the building owned by Westminster City Council?**
AM: No, it is owned by Great Bear N.V. who are a big multinational company.

***Organise!:* And they are taking you to court?**
AM: Yes, their solicitors are on their behalf.

***Organise!:* How is the squat run? Is it run by meetings of all the people who live there?**
AM: There was the original group that lived here and kicked it all off. Some of those have already left and there is a core group of people that remain in order to make sure that the place carries on and is responsible. A lot of rough sleepers have got involved in the organisation of the place, holding the door together, making sure there are candles, food, a bucket, donations, leaflets and talking to the media. So now it's not as though there is one committee of people, although the few people that have remained from the original group that got in have tried to keep it steered in the right direction.

***Organise!:* So there is quite a lot of active participation?**
AM: Yes, there is a lot. It's quite magical really to see some people come in off the street when they have been on the street for ten months. Some of them are quite brewed up, but they get into

the way it is run. For example there is Bill who is a rough sleeper and has just booked out of his hostel, which is due to close in two weeks and moved in here. He makes a great big tub of soup every day and that is his place and his pride.

***Organise!:* So is it the first time he has been under a roof in a while? Has it really changed him a lot?**
AM: Yes. They have respect and dignity when they have got their own room and their own lock on the door. They can build their own fire, they have sofas, pictures they have picked up in skips hung up on walls. They have turned it into a home straight away. They don't want to go back onto the streets after this because it is the first bit of dignity they have had for a long while.

***Organise!:* They might try to move into other places after this?**
AM: Yes. Quite a lot of them are saying they were not aware of the fact that you could squat and having talked to people and got clued up on how to do it, I think that there will be a whole group of people that won't wish to return to sleeping in the doorway of Victoria Street after this place. They will go and try and squat in an empty property.

***Organise!:* What relationship does it have to the old squatting movement that started in 1969? Are there any veterans from that movement who were involved in taking over the flats?**
AM: No. I don't think that you can view it as an organised movement that evolves in a structured way. There aren't any veterans that are involved in it. Advisory Service for Squatters are involved in preparing a court case and I guess that there are a few veterans there, but not in the running of the place.

***Organise!:* What sort of support are you looking for? Can people who are not rough sleepers or homeless give their support apart from donations of food and blankets?**
AM: They can get down here and help man the place. There is constantly lots of cleaning up to be done. There is constantly lots of running around to be done with the small group that is trying to keep it centred along the line and are well stretched. So if anyone wants to get down here and help, there is a vacuum for them to step into.

***Organise!:* Is there any friction between people in the place? Do people fall out?**
AM: It's peaceful.

***Organise!:* So if the court issues a possession order, you will stay until the bailiffs come?**
AM: Yes.

***Organise!:* Will people have to be taken out of the building?**
AM: Yes.

***Organise!:* Do you think it will inspire the homeless to start squatting?**
AM: Yes, as I said earlier, they didn't even know about squatting until this happened.

***Organise!:* Is there any way that the homeless can be reached and told about this?**
AM: This is really the best instruction to it. It's hard to go up to people in the street and tell them that they can get in if they find an empty window. Here they are exposed to the reality that they have a room of their own for the first time in over a year. Having said that, the Bill will be coming out between Easter and June.

***Organise!:* The Bill at the moment refers to some new court orders which haven't yet been defined?**
AM: There are two things with regard to squatting. There is delegated legislation, which is going to be handed down from the Lord Chancellor's Department. That is the teeth of which the Bill is the drawback. They are going to have two consultation processes about that. They are going to float the idea, have a consultation process. They are going to formulate the idea and then have another consultation process. The first consultation process is already underway; they published it last week. There have been three new clauses about squatting since the publication of the Bill and they are worse than the original Bill itself. They extend the definition of PIO's and DRO's to include private tenants and leasehold owners of anything more than two years. It used to be anything more than 21 years, or anyone acting on their behalf. It gives those people or anyone acting on their behalf the right to gain violent entry, which means it removes the security of the front door and gives license to vigilante bailiffs.

***Organise!:* So instead of having to get a court order first, you can be asleep in bed and find that someone is axing the door down?**
AM: That's right. It says you have to let the people know first. These were passed through the standing committee two weeks ago. The next stage is the report stage when it goes back to the House of Commons. It seems likely that it will be passed.

Need an Antidote?

Aylesbury group of the ACF have produced a local agitational magazine *Antidote.* No 1 is available containing articles on Jobplan Workshop, the Child Support Act, Nestle, and What We Believe. Copies can be obtained (free or donation) by sending an SAE to Aylesbury ACF, PO Box 406, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 8LS

If Fred West had been a hunt sabber . . ?

Every year, when councils are working out their budgets, the police put in a bid to increase their funding to help them "investigate" crime. Well, the police in Gloucester would need to increase their detective work a hundredfold judging by their recent piece of gardening.

A man's wife, daughters and lodger disappear and the police don't notice this may be more than coincidence. Presumably if they had sent a policewoman round to ask about the missing lodger her colleagues might still be scratching their heads about why such a good officer disappeared without even resigning!

But the police budget has very little to do with detective work.

What the budget is really about is funding the control of dissent, riots, demos, strikes and occupations and Gloucester police's budgetary demands this year have rather more to do with harassing travellers, hunts sabs and working class youth than with looking for the next multiple murderer.

Cross Channel Links

An interview with a militant of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire

THE ACF has always considered international relations as a key area of our activity. We believe that the social revolution must and will be international, therefore it is vital that revolutionary anarchists and libertarian communists begin now to extend international contacts. We have long been in contact with the Organisation Communiste Libertaire in France. Until recently this has largely been confined to an exchange of publications.

Then, last summer, we attended the OCL Summer Camp in Southern France where we held lengthy discussions on a number of important issues. This has led us to seek closer contacts with this organisation which in many ways is similar to the ACF. This proved easier than expected as the OCL has a group in Boulogne — easier to get to than most of Britain for the London comrades of the ACF! So, in October a number of us decided to pay them a visit where we conducted an interview that we thought would be informative for anyone interested in what libertarian communists are doing across the channel.

Above: Against militarism and nationalism! Three thousand plus anarchists march in Paris.

The interview

ACF: How are you organised in Boulogne?
OCL: The group has been around since 1989. For the first two years we stayed independent of any national structure because we had different areas of interest, eg SCALP (anti-fascist group), links with the Federation Anarchiste. Some comrades had never been active before. However, soon we felt the need to become integrated into a national structure in order to overcome our isolation. We needed to do this because our region, the Pas de Calais, has no libertarian organisation and the extreme left in general is very weak. This is because the Pas de Calais has been a bastion of the socialist and communist left for many decades.

ACF: What are your practical activities?
OCL: Since 1989 we have been involved in a variety of struggles depending on our capabilities. We were able to organise a bus to go to the demonstration of anti-fascists in Lille as a response to the attacks on SCALP by the neo-Nazis. The same year we organised a concert/discussion evening against the agreement signed by the socialist government to link the schools more closely to the army. One member of the group participated in the demonstrations against the poll tax in London. Following that we published a pamphlet of which we distributed 300 copies in order to popularise that struggle.
During the Gulf war we participated in the Anti-War Collective which was formed in Boulogne. However, the dominant role played by the Communist Party in that group meant that we had to keep our distance.

Alternative

Since then we have been publishing a local paper called *La Mouette Enragée* (The Angry Seagull) which is sold in newsagents around the town. This gives us the opportunity to offer an alternative analysis of what's going on in the locality. We sell between 50 and 75 copies.
For the past year and a half we have been supporting the campaign of a comrade who was sacked by a Socialist council in a town near Boulogne. We have succeeded in involving the two alternative unions: the SUD, which was created by militants who were thrown out of the CFDT (the union close to the Socialist Party) and the CNT, an anarcho-syndicalist union.

ACF: Relations with other groups?
OCL: We are the only revolutionary group in our town. The Communist Party remains relatively well implanted, but we don't really have much to do with them. We have good relations with the Federation Anarchiste which is well represented in Lille. For three years we have had a stand beside the FA's at the Braderie de Lille which is a big popular festival in that town.

ACF: The Front National in France?
OCL: The Front National developed when the Left was in power. In fact, it was a manoeuvre by the Socialist Party (PS) that was never admitted. In allowing the FN to develop the PS put a spoke in the wheel of the right, splitting its vote and making it more or less weakend and divided. In the course of ten years the PS led attacks against the working class that the right would not have been allowed to make. The workers "betrayed" by those they voted in in 1981 were left without any strategies. The parties of the left and the unions were disempowered and the FN had the way open to develop.
It was evident that on the basis of the economic crisis and crisis of the traditional political groupings that the FN appears as an alternative grouping. The FN developed in the absence of offensive workers' struggles, thanks to the development of unemployment, poverty and above all the splintering of the old solidarities and the old social lines. The workers' vote for the FN has not been negligible. This has had the effect of seeing all the traditional political groupings adopt a language of national security that is openly racist. All the same, the FN remains a party financed by the bourgeoisie, whose cadres are in the majority members of the middle classes: lawyers, doctors, managers.

ACF: Your successes and your problems?
OCL: It is difficult for us to speak of successes. We try to get our voice heard with all our feeble means. Our weakness is still the too ideological character of our approach.

ACF: International relations?
OCL: This is a key strategy that all the revolutionary organisations must develop. The example of the Libertarian Communist International

Coordination (CICL) that the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste started up in the '70s seems a good example of the type of relations to develop. For example, putting in contact activists in the same line of work, like railway workers and bank workers ... the bourgeoisie is organised internationally, what are we waiting for? Never have we been possessed of so many means of communication, let's profit from them!

ACF: Relations between the local group and the national organisation?

OCL: We have organised two magazine commissions in Boulogne. These commissions are held every month in a different town and are responsible for preparing the next issue of our journal *Courant Alternatif*. This arrangement allows the functioning of all the groups and democratic control. The OCL is interesting because it is not centralised in Paris, unlike the FA which has a bookshop and a radio station in the capital. Parisian centralisation is an historic phenomenon which has the disagreeable advantage of creating a divide between Paris and the provinces. This often creates a noticeable separation in the press. We do not think this is the case with the OCL.

The Friends of Durruti — New pamphlet!

LONDON ACF have produced a pamphlet on the *Friends of Durruti*, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves. This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the *Stormy Petrel* series. Coming up is a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the *Friends of Durruti* pamphlet available from ACF (London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, E1 at 75p inc. postage.

Demonstration and Festival

AT THE DEMONSTRATION and festival against militarism and nationalism on 11th November 1993 in the Place de la Republique in Paris over 3000 militants from the libertarian organisations assembled to voice their opposition to militarism and nationalism. Present were the OCL, Alternative Libertaire, Federation Anarchiste, Union des Anarchistes and Confederation National de Travail. There was music and stalls from 11am-4.30pm. Also present were contingents from Apache (SCALP), a militant anti-fascist grouping and the anti-fascist skinheads of SHARP. The day chosen was Remembrance Day for the First World War, and the main slogans of the rally were "States, Poverty, Racism and Arms Trade Foster the Wars"; "Against the Racist, Nationalist, Capitalist, Militarist Order"; "Action, Insubordination, Solidarity!" There was a contingent from Belgian and Italian comrades. This event received little coverage in the media (surprise, surprise!).

International Round-up

THE ACF SEES the need for an international unification of revolutionary anarchists and libertarian communists. Capitalism is international, so is the working class. Our assault upon Capitalism must be international and we need an international organisation to co-ordinate this.

Unfortunately, such a co-ordination does not, for the moment, exist and a great deal of work, both political and organisational, needs to be done in order to create it. The ACF is in contact with similar political groups and tendencies in various countries and we regularly exchange publications. We thought our readers would be interested to know about libertarian revolutionaries and publications which hold similar positions to our own. We are, therefore, reviewing some of the journals which we have recently recieved.

courant alternatif

Courant Alternatif no. 36. Published monthly, *Courant Alternatif* is the magazine of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire, a national co-ordination of libertarian revolutionaries in France. Issue 36 contains articles on the Zapatista uprising in Mexico: 'Against The New World Order, Viva Zapata!', on the role of education under capitalism: 'School, Knowledge and Training' and on the recent state repression against Kurdish organisations in France amongst its 36 pages. This edition also has a supplement tabloid on the state of the class struggle in France.

COMUNISMO LIBERTARIO

Comunismo Libertario no. 7/8. A bi-monthly journal of anti- authoritarian theory and practice, *Comunismo Libertario* is produced by the Federazione di Comunisti Anarchici but acts as a discussion journal for much of the libertarian left in Italy. This edition carries articles on the manoeuvring of the two "communist" parties, PDS (Part of the Democratic Left) and the Rifondazione Comunista. Also of interest is an article on the School COBAS (Committees of the Base) in which anarchist communists have been active.

Confrontations no. 24. *Confrontations* is the quarterly review of the Organisation Socialiste Libertaire in Switzerland. Originally confined to French speaking Switzerland, the OSL now has sections in German speaking areas. In common with much of the libertarian communist press there is a focus on the Zapatistas. Also included is an article on the Spanish general strike in January and a report of the events from the perspective of the CGT, an anarcho-syndicalist union in Spain. Like much of Europe's libertarian left the OSL has an ambiguous attitude towards syndicalist methods of organisation.

Workers Solidarity no. 41. Quarterly magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland. Originally a monthly, *Workers Solidarity* has been coming out for 10 years now. From no. 42 it will changing from a magazine to a tabloid format and will be supplemented by a new journal called *Libertarian Socialism*. The central article in issue 41 is 'What Sort of Ireland Do We Want?' but there's also stuff on various struggles happening over there. And of course . . . an article on Zapata! Despite our real differences with the WSM, particularly over the trade union and national questions, *Workers Solidarity* remains an impressive example of committed libertarian journalism.

WORKERS SOLIDARITY
MAGAZINE OF THE WORKERS SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT
ISSUE NO. 41 SPRING 1994
60p

Lonnsslaven no. 4. *Lonnsslaven*, meaning "The Wage Slave", describes itself as a "Paper for the Abolition of Wage Slavery and for Anti-Statist Socialism". A 36-page magazine, it is produced by an editorial group in Oslo, Norway. No. 4 contains articles on science and technology, on the Autonome movement in northern Europe: 'Autonomy or Brutal Reformism?' and an analysis of the Timex Strike in Dundee, amongst others. Probably the most clear-sighted libertarian communist journal in Scandinavia.

Alternative Libertaire no. 21. Lots of stuff on the Zapatistas in this 16-page monthly journal of the organisation of the same name. The French group Alternative Libertaire used to be known as the Union of Libertarian Communist Workers but is now "broader" politically/organisationally.

Alternative Libertaire

The Revolt no. 2. "A Magazine of Revolutionary Anarchism" from the South African based Anarchist Revolutionary Movement, is the only non-European journal in this review. Includes articles on New World Order in Africa, the South African Police: "SAP— To Serve and Protect... To Torture and Kill' and on the violence in the black community amongst other stuff. The ARM also distribute our pamphlet *The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation*!

In the next *Organise!* we hope to be able to review libertarian communist journals which we haven't had space for here.

VIVA ZAPATA!

"REVOLT IS LIFE, submission is death." — Ricardo Flores Magon, Mexican anarchist, murdered by US authorities in 1922.

The armed uprising of 1st January 1994 launched by the EZLN (Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional) in the southern state of Chiapas surprised all of Mexican society, even though this movement was totally forseeable. After its initial surprise, the government admitted its knowledge of the movement of armed groups in Chiapas during 1993, during which several soldiers were killed.

Over the next few days the Mexican media published a list of actions taken against the peasants, the great majority of whom are Indians. Armed repression was the immediate reply of the authorities to the demands for better conditions, followed by arrests and mass imprisonment. The attacks on the peasants led by the landowners, big farmers and the Army contributed to the radicalisation of the peasant organisations, which linked peasant demands to respect for individual rights, and which took up the call for radical agrarian reform. The EZLN sprang out of these organisations.

Chiapas state is the home to the descendants of the Mayas, who hang on to the mountain slopes, cultivating tiny patches of land that produce just enough to survive. The earth here is volcanic and very fertile, but it gets easily washed away in the first rainstorms. Growing maize allows for survival, and just that, and mortality, above all infant mortality, is very high. The men hire themselves out for work on a regular basis, for three-six consecutive months during the coffee harvest. The small towns of the valleys are occupied by mestizos (mixed blood) and whites who have ferocious racist attitudes towards the Indians.

The Indians were driven from the more fertile valleys to the wooded slopes to make room for the big plantations. Now they are not even safe there, as the Mexican airforce carries out bombing raids.

Chiapas state is 80% Indian, yet not one Indian is in a responsible post. There is an almost complete lack of education among the Indians. The owners of the *fincas*, the great coffee plantations, see them only as a source of labour, and the government regard them as invisible, with no rights and no voice.

But the Indians of the region have always put up a fierce and courageous resistance to the system of exploitation put into place by the Spanish colonialists and by their successors. In 1847 the Mayan rebellion broke out against the plantation owners and resistance lasted for fifty years. The Mexican authorities exacted a terrible revenge.

The Trans-American Highway has opened up the region to the tourists from the USA, and locals are used as guides and to provide ethnic flavour to the visits to the important Maya ruins. Because of the historic tradition of struggle of the Indians, they are closely watched by the authorities. This has not stopped them creating alternative structures operating in semi-secrecy or complete secrecy. It is quite common to find in a village an official administration run by mestizos and a secret structure operated by Indians. A lot rarer, and more tolerated than accepted is the example of villages like Chamula. This village on the heights over San Cristobal de las Casas has a council of elders which runs the village. It supplies the town with all its fruit and vegetables and quickly became swamped by tourists. The council decided to close the village to tourists and not to supply food until an amenable solution was reached.

Despite this, the attack on traditional culture, deculturation, is enormous. The Indians' ancestors were celebrated for the production of wool items, but now one finds most clothes made out of imported synthetic materials, which are much less effective against the mountain cold.

The Mexican authorities, and their counterparts in the rest of the world, tried to make out that the self-organisation of the Indians in the EZLN was impossible, and must be the work of Marxist-Leninist guerilla groups infiltrating from Guatamala. The British left, tied as it is to the ruling class, was sometimes to be found guilty of this. One paper, which likes to denounce Trotskyists and anarchists equally and which situates itself on the "communist left" came out with the following moronic statement that the Zapatistas "may have been manipulated by Mexican or other Latin American leftist guerilla groups".

The uprising was chosen specifically to coincide with the signing by President Salinas of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which started operating on 1 January 1994. The United States itself now feels implicated, and under pressure at home, has to tell the Mexican State to back off from full scale repression. Strategically, the date was also well-chosen because many soldiers were drunk in the barracks and police stations because of the New Year celebrations. The Zapatistas were thus able to occupy five towns smoothly and efficiently. To capture the town hall of a large town with a large barracks only eight kilometres away is a considerable achievement. On 2 January they voluntarily left the towns to undertake a two-day

march to the forest of Lacandon, where they created a zone of liberation which is well-nigh impregnable. The armed detachments are formed of 90% young men and women. The local villages are supplying them with food.

The Catholic Church has been thrown into disarray by the uprising. When the Mexican Revolution took place, the property of the Church was confiscated by the State. But two years ago, the Church reached a deal with the Federal government in Chiapas that it could have its churches and cathedrals back if it laid off making noises about human rights and the situation of the Indians. So now there is open conflict between the supporters of liberation theology who have links with the Indian communities, and those who want to make sure they keep their property. This explains the abortive attempt of the Vatican to have the Bishop of San Cristobal, Samuel Ruiz, removed from office. The Mexican government put pressure on the Pope to carry this out then backed off when the uprising broke out.

Refusal

The development of the struggle in Chiapas, combining armed action with mass direct action, the occupation of the land and the official buildings points to the existence of a strong social movement. The refusal of the EZLN to talk about capturing power, the understanding that workers of the land and town must unite, the radical and sometimes anti-hierarchical sensibility of its pronouncements and the references to Emiliano Zapata, the most libertarian of the leading lights of the Mexican Revolution, who had many close contacts with the Mexican anarchist movement, makes us view the EZLN in a favourable light.

Against this, we have to note the gap between the vast mass of the movement, the peasants in arms, and the EZLN committee. The peasants want the land to be held in common and they want better roads, medical services and schools. If you ask them about the NAFTA they don't say that this isn't important, that it doesn't interest them, but they refer you to the committee. The committee is able to fax its messages to the principal papers and is very aware of the international situation. Whilst putting the Indian problem at the head of the agenda, they demand that the workers in foreign-owned factories receive the same wages as those workers in the workplaces at home. This is OK as far as it goes, but it shows a gap between the mass and the "leading militants" which the ACF has always recognised as a problem. There is no talk about the big Western corporations which own up to 30,000 hectares of land in the region, whilst Mexican law permits a ceiling of 2,500 hectares. These corporations have got around this by making each 2,500 hectares out to mum, dad, kids and the dog!

Another major problem is that the EZLN has not broken with the illusion of democracy. They talk about "The formation of a free and democratic government in our country" and "the liberated populations freely and democratically electing their own administrative authorities" (from the ***Declaration of the Forest of Lacandon***). The second statement is ambiguous. Does it mean the creation of revolutionary bodies controlled by mass assemblies of working people or does it mean participating in the democratic farce? All this alongside statements like "We use the colours red and black in our uniform, because they are symbols of working people in their strikes". The committee itself may well be dominated by partisans of liberation theology, drawn from among the Catholic lay preachers.

The Zapatista revolt has been driven by hunger and desperation and represents the first attempts by peasants to organise. Because it is still developing its ideas its politics are ambiguous and there are real possibilities of the struggles of the Indians and poor Mexican peasants being hijacked. Some of the political parties are already making out they support the cause of the Indians. Amongst these are the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution) of Cuauhtemoc Gardenas and certain sections of the ruling Institutional Party of Revolution who were in disagreement with Luis Donaldo Colosio being made official candidate for the forthcoming presidential elections. As well as these mainstream parties, there are the little parties which represent "the real proletarian spirit of the people" like the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Party Union of the People (PROCUP) and the Party of the Poor (PDLP) who claimed responsibility for the bomb attacks carried out a few weeks after the outbreak of the rising.

The peasants of Chiapas cannot win on their own. There need to be active links made with peasants of other regions of Mexico and the workers of the towns. Real and effective international solidarity has to be built up, both in the rest of Latin America and in North America and the rest of the world. If this does not happen then they risk a long and frightful guerilla war where they may suffer terrible casualties and where they remain trapped in the false ideas of liberation theology, democracy and national liberation.

Postscript

The assassination of Colosio, the official candidate of the ruling party further destabilises the situation in Mexico. There are possibilities that he may have been killed by rival factions in the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or by elements within the Army. The militarists wanted to smash the Zapatistas brutally, but were restrained by the government, themselves under pressure from the USA. Whatever the answers, the Mexican situation can only be further aggravated, bringing the period of tight control by the ruling clique to an end.

Anarchism in Arabic!

AIDED BY international contributions, the comrades of Al Badil al taharouri (Libertarian Alternative) in Lebanon have completed the translation into Arabic of *Anarchism*.

This is considered by many to be the best introduction to class struggle anarchism, and was written by the veteran French libertarian communist Daniel Guerin.

Now the comrades need the money to print it. IMOs etc, made payable to Agora 2000, to finance and to aid Al Badil al taharouri can be sent via BP 177, 75967 Paris cedex 20, France.

Appeal of the comrades active in Yugoslavia

FOLLOWING THE issue of the bulletin *Preko Zidova Nacionalizma i Rata* (Beyond the Walls of Nationalism and War), the Italian anarchist group Germinal in Trieste, on the border with ex-Yugoslavia, have received the following appeal from a number of small anarchist groups in Yugoslavia (Serbia).

They say: "We need help. We have neither anarchist books nor pamphlets nor papers. We have no experience of struggle. We need support in several ways. Whatever you decide to send us will be useful for our development, to defend our ideas and reach out to others. Remember: solidarity is a revolutionary action".

Anyone who wants to help these comrades active in this part of the Balkans, particularly isolated because of the embargo which favours the government and speculation, can send material written in English to Germinal at: GRUPPO GERMINAL, 11 via Mazzini, 34124 Italy.

You can also get copies of the bulletin written in Serbo-Croat from them to distribute here.

The Mythology of Nationalism

THE MYTH OF the golden age before the invader came has been a potent force in modern Irish republican politics.

The shining vision of the pure Gaelic race, rich in culture and learning, ruled by noble kings and defended by superhuman heroes, has become so fixed in the nationalist psyche that ancient legends are more often seen as historical fact than as stories that have grown in the telling. To the exploited and demoralised worker in Belfast and the Bogside the dream of finally ousting the invader and recreating this golden age has had a powerful appeal. The cruel lie that everything would be wonderful if we could get the Brits out is central to nationalist mobilisation.

On the other side of the fence the loyalists have also cottoned on to the racial purity con, realising that the British label, which they have so desperately clung to and so tragically died for in their thousands, may be plucked from their patriotic breasts by an ungrateful master. They too have burrowed deep into the misty past to find their own set of dubious roots in the fertile soil of Irish (sorry . . . Ulster) mythology. This has furnished them with an historical basis for their Ulster Nationhood.

The real history of the Irish people (in the sense of inhabitants of a geographical area rather than of some rhetorical abstraction called "The People") is a buried beneath the crushing weight of the mythology, romanticism, power struggles, political manoeuvring and carefully fostered lies of the "Great Men" who shaped and wrote the official versions.

But who are the "Irish/Ulster people"? What is the common root of "Irishness/Ulsterness" which nationalists proclaim? Any attempt at establishing racial purity in Ireland is doomed to failure, even a cursory glance at an Irish telephone directory or even at the surnames of Irish republican leaders, from Tone to De Valera and Adams, will reveal the varied ingredients that serve to make up the modern Irish population. The list of those that invaded/cultivated the island and were subsequently assimilated into the population is long and diverse. Amongst the ingredients that make up the "Irish stew" can be included such names as Firbolg, Pict, Cruthin, Celt, Viking, Anglo-Norman and finally Scottish and English "planters".

Contrary to Irish nationalist mythology, it can be stated with certainty that, prior to the 12th century Anglo-Norman conquest, there is no suggestion that the geographical landmass known as Ireland was a united nation under a single political administration. Ancient Ireland was a tribal society, each tribe had its chieftain who defended the communal land while trying to grab a bit of some other tribe's territory and/or livestock. Although there may have existed some loose confederations of tribes from time to time, there seems to be no evidence of any "national" unity. The existence of a "High King" is something of a red herring in this matter. The "High King" was not, as the title tends to suggest, the overall leader of any "nation" but rather the ruler of one tribe who, in the event of a confederation of chieftains being formed, could assume an overall command. This should offer no great solace to Ulster nationalists either.

The fact that no High King based at Tara would have exercised any permanent authority over the tribes of Ulster, as the likes of the UDA enjoy claiming, is no more relevant to today than the fact that a tribe in ancient Munster would have felt little in common with a tribe in ancient Leinster, or that the Gaelic speakers of Ulster would have had difficulty in understanding the Gaelic spoken in Connaught or the Scottish highlands for that matter! And, despite the obvious cross-fertilization, ethnic and cultural, owing to the close proximity of Scotland to the North East of Ireland, this factor cannot be legitimately utilised as an explanation for the present divisions.

The coming of the Anglo-Normans to Ireland in 1169 saw the first stages of their eventual conquest of the island. A divided and militarily inferior Irish people proved to be no match for the might of the Norman fighting machine that had conquered a far more homogenous England and Wales. The Normans did however become quickly assimilated into "the locals", often becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves. The Norman leaders made good use of the divisions which existed between the various peoples of the island, forming alliances with whichever of them could best advance their objectives. Ironically, it was the armies of Ulster which held out longest against the forces of the crown. Eventually, however, the island of Ireland was "united" under the Anglo-Norman yoke. It was not until the 1790s that Irish resistance took a consciously national form in line with the emergence of modern nationalist ideology. After the defeat of the United Irishmen's 1798 aborted revolution the "union" would not again be seriously challenged until the "Gaelic Revival" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The real roots of this movement lay of course in the soil of economics. The legitimate discontent of the Irish working class was easily manipulated by groups such as Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein whose motives were far removed from altruistic concern for the common people (see *Organise!* 23 for a discussion of this period).

The religious factor in Irish politics became prominent from the time of the Plantation onwards. The Gaelic Irish were predominantly Catholic whilst the Gaelic Scottish and English planters and their aristocratic landlords were predominantly Protestant. This religious factor was to increase in prominence despite widespread intermarriage and "conversions" on both sides. Those involved in the struggle for power, which continues to this day, have never been slow to accentuate and capitalise upon the religious factor, utilising it as an effective tool for control and manipulation. From the genocidal antics of Oliver Cromwell to the struggle for the English throne, through various sectarian revolts and ecclesiastical power struggles, the religious divide has been carefully fostered. The history of Ireland has been so distorted and manipulated to suit the power hungry, that the Irish melting pot that assimilated peoples as diverse as Vikings, Picts and Celts has been reduced, in many minds, to the crude lie of "Catholic" Ireland fighting to regain its ancient "nation" from the imperialist "Protestant" invaders.

Leftists, and some "anarchists" have not been blameless in perpetuating the myths and lies which fuel divisions amongst the working class of this island. Much of the left has acted as cheerleader for the reactionary and often racist nationalism espoused by the pseudo-socialist IRA. This attitude has further alienated working class Protestants and driven them towards the Orange right and political neanderthals of loyalism.

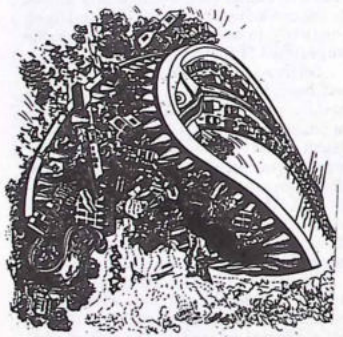
The Provos like to portray the conflict here as a colonial war but, whatever it may have been in the past, it is certainly not a colonial war today. The British government does not want Northern Ireland, the Irish government does not want Northern Ireland. Neither want a civil war, however, and their tactics, despite some fairly superficial differences, are concentrated upon neutralizing the "extremists" on both sides, whether by incorporation or by oppression; sometimes by both methods. The choice for the working class remains the same: continued manipulation by nationalists and capitalists of all hues or self-organised struggle against all of them. Only when the latter road is taken will the Irish working class make their own history rather than be the subject of ruling class self-interest.

Transport or Traffic?

IN THIS ARTICLE we look at the origins of the motor traffic system and the huge malign influence of the Road Lobby. In the next issue we will look at the Human and Environmental consequences and alternatives/resistance to road traffic.

Origins of Traffic System

Nikoli Kondriatev, a Marxist writing in the 1920s posited the Kondriatev cycle which argued that the industrial economy expanded and contracted in waves of about 50 years: peaks in 1817, 1870 and 1914 and troughs around 1745, 1790, 1844 and 1890. Andrew Tylecote suggested that each boom period is associated with the successful emergence of a "new technological style" characterised by a new form of transportation. The end of the 18th century in Britain saw the development of the canal system, the rising boom of 1844-70 the emerging rail network, with the steel and electrical style before the First World War developing in the boom decade after 1918 into Fordism. After the 1930s slump and World War Two, Fordism — the Transnational Oil based economy of cars and motorways, super tankers and aeroplanes — came into its own. These theories suggest



that the economy expands until it reaches the limits of its distribution system. Slumps tend to be caused by glut — the inability to shift (rather than produce) goods. One promising way out of recession is therefore to reach a larger market by developing new transport systems.

Whatever the validity of this theory, the ruling class are often ruthless in their elimination of old transport systems in order to introduce new ones. No sooner had the British canal system been introduced, at great expense, than it was judged obsolete. The new rail companies, flush with investors' money, bought up canals and took them down; within a few decades the canal system was moribund and Britain was covered in railways.

Road Lobby

The Road Lobby is made up of companies who profit from cars, lorries and the raw materials, fuel and infrastructure they need. Worldwide they are responsible for destroying more human-scale, environmentally friendly forms of transport with huge consequences for community, health and environment. Why? Because they are less profitable: one bus does the work of 35 cars, a tram that of 60, a train that of 1000 cars or 150 lorries.

In 1925, the General Motors Corporation set about systematically destroying non-motor transport systems in America. They bought up the largest manufacturer of urban and inter-urban buses in America. In 1926 they helped set up the Motor Transit Corporation (Greyhound) which agreed to purchase all its equipment from GM. General Motors then bought up all possible competitors for production of buses, destroying the commuter services of Pennsylvania, NY Central, NY, New Haren and Hartford. Southern Pacific, Great Northern and St Louis South Western railroads were also badly affected. In similar vein in 1936 they set up a company, together with Standard Oil and Fines the Tyres, which bought up US train companies and closed them down. By 1956 over 100 electric surface rail systems in 45 cities had been acquired and closed down. In cities, the only way that a new market for the buses could be created was for GM to finance the conversion of its electrical tramway systems to motor buses. This was done by setting up the United Cities Motor Transit Company in 1932. Tramways were bought, converted to buses and then sold off to local companies which were compelled to buy General Motors equipment exclusively. This continued rapidly until 1935 when the American Transit Association exposed GM's chicanery. Company executives and employees "independently" set up another holding company with other car and oil companies, National City Lines, in 1936. Local companies now had to agree to buy only new equipment which used fuel oil and GM/Standard Oil products and Firestone Tyres exclusively.

Before the motorisation of California by GM, Los Angeles was a beautiful city of lush palm trees, fragrant orange groves and ocean air. Now it is a wasteland. Trees are dying in a petrochemical smog. The orange groves, polluted by lead from petrol fumes were paved over for 300 miles of freeways. The air is a cesspit into which four million cars daily pump 13,000 tons of pollutants. Fifty years after the American road lobby started work, the US transport system is a nightmare. Pedestrians and cyclists have been bullied off the streets, railways have almost vanished and half the lead area of most cities consists of roads and parking lots. The road lobby bankrolls many politicians to vote against clean air and fuel efficiency, making American cars the most wasteful in the western world.

In Britain, the road lobby is represented by the British Road Federation, founded in the 1930s to "combat the sinister and distorted propaganda of the railways to enslave British Industry". It is a coalition of car makers such as Ford, motor organisations (AA, RAC), roadbuilders (Taylor Woodrow, McAlpine), oil companies (BP, Texacxo), lorry operators (TIT, Freight Transport Association) and diverse others (eg Tate & Lyle Sugars, Bulmers Cider Ltd, National Farmers Union). They are all united by the prospect of economic growth, which they maintain is linked to the health of the motor industry and "reducing transport costs" (Department of Transport). In Britain the (Labour) government started the demolition of the railway system. It was bought and nationalised after the Second World War. Some 46% of the track was torn up and much of the rest run down. The road lobby is now in the vanguard of privatising the railways, which will decimate what remains of a once comprehensive transport system. Member firms of the RTF are presently planning bids for rail privatisation which will be an asset-stripping bonanza to dwarf that of the buses. There will be prime development sites in city centres, "weird" rural services will probably be made the responsibility of local government, then councils will be starved of cash so they have to cut services (and take the flack). The strategy of the road lobby is to continually up their demands. If the road is a single lane, dual it. If dualled give it three lanes. If somewhere doesn't have a by-pass, give it one. If there is one to the south, give it one to the north. If it has an M25, build another. If it already has a north-south motorway (as in East Anglia), add another.

Traffic lobbyists and planners now talk of the need for "infrastructure" rather than roads, a co-ordinated distribution system using different technologies: "a single network, lined by markets, technology and organisation, which produce a single output: mobility for the citizen and the economy". (The European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) which includes Fiat, Volvo, Daimler-Benz, MAN, Petrofina, Total, Shell, BP, Pirelli and Plessey).

Railways are now back in favour — if they are high speed, such as TGV/part of

Continued on back page

Cultural Identity: An Anarchist Perspective

MANY OF THE examples used here are taken from an Irish context. This is because I am familiar with Irish culture and would rather use it exclusively in this article than make errors by using examples from, say, North America. Readers can make comparisons with their own culture and hopefully the uniqueness of Irish culture will not distort the theory incorporated in this piece.

Culture is a glib word these days. It is a subject for the arrogant intelligensia to idly chat about at fashionable gatherings. It is a source of profit for parasitical industries. It's true meaning of belonging and identity has been forgotten. But how does anarchist communism fit into all of this and secondly, why?

Firstly, I would like to point out the advantages of a form of identity that is common to us all: cultural identity. This phrase is often linked with right-wing hate groups, patriotic warmongers and articles written by upper middle class journalists in the *Sunday Mail*. However, one of the purposes of this article is to show that culture can be of advantage to groups and individuals.

The idea of "belonging" comes easily to human beings. We are naturally sociable animals with complex social structures and a high degree of intelligence. It was inevitable that a series of dress codes, music forms, art forms, languages, dances, stories etc would develop from such an advancing species. It is obvious that the above would unite people into tribes, clans and "peoples".

The emotion of "being part of the group" is a major part of the human psyche. When a person feels part of their chosen group, they feel the solidarity and strength of the group supporting them. The aforementioned expressions of culture (language, music etc) reinforce this feeling, which is all too often looked down on by middle-class leftists as being mindless, animalistic conformity. They fail to see that it is an intrinsic part of human nature and an emotion that is hard to resist. They fail to see that cultural identity can give people a degree of self-respect, dignity and a sense of belonging.

Culture reinforces the idea of community. When people feel that they have something in common, ie their language, their traditions, they feel a bond that encourages fraternity and comradeship.

Culture has been a weapon against imperialism and colonialism. Native Americans, Africans and other oppressed peoples had their language and customs suppressed and eradicated because the imperialists correctly recognised that they were an obstacle in their path towards domination and exploitation. The oppressors knew their victims drew solidarity from their traditions and that to make any "progress" then these traditions would have to be removed. Admittedly, some Europeans believed that they were acting in their victims' best interests but this is a lame excuse for the cultural (and sometimes physical) genocides that took place.

Culture has been seen to be subversive in its opposition to uniformity and passivity. Taking Ireland as an example, during the years of the Stormont government there was no funding for Irish language groups and Gaelic games were not permitted at one council's playing grounds. Television pictures and news in general sent out from Ulster gave the impression of a serene little corner of the UK which could have been Cornwall or Yorkshire. Royal visits were carried out to show "the people's" aversion to Irish culture.

Cultural suppression is still carried out today. Wales has a Welsh TV channel, education in Welsh and road signs and town names in Welsh. Northern Ireland has little of this. Any form of Celtism is immediately connected with An Poblacht, Sinn Fein, the IRA and Tiocfaidh ar la. So in the British government's terms, Irish culture is subversive. Comparisons with the above example can be made with many other colonial countries.

To round up on culture's advantages: culture is a means of encouraging community. It is a means of giving identity to the individual. Its expressions (music, art, etc) are there for the creative mind to enjoy. Culture can be a way of resisting uniformity and imperialism.

However, cultural identity has a darker side. Its universal attraction has been used by ambitious national leaders to enslave the working class. Nationalism rears its ugly head wherever culture is used aggressively. It is used as an excuse for war and even genocide. The myth of national unity is an engineered result of people's enthusiasm for cultural identity. When the idea that the English/Irish/X working class has something in common with the English/Irish/X capitalist class gains influence it should be obvious that culture has been used to form an unequal inter-class relationship. When "all Irish together" means "all Irish together (as long as you work for me)" we should be able to see that culture has been used as a weapon *against* the working class.

Culture is used for militaristic purposes. "For Queen and Country" is a familiar saying and comes easily to the lips of the older generation. The horrific example of the World Wars show us how the "us and them" attitude was used against the working class. National service is welcomed in many countries as a patriotic duty. Culture's expressions can be restrictive. Dress codes, skin colour must meet the standard norm of the majority. Dissent is not encouraged. The non-conformist is "funny" or a "crank" and is inevitably shunned.

Indeed, "our" culture has been exploited by capitalism to a degree that is now detrimental to our lives. The tourist industry uses "native tradition" as a major marketing ploy to sell us holidays and souvenirs. Money is made from putting on displays of staged folk dancing and the like. The immorality of the profit motive is obvious from this perversion of culture. To have what is rightfully ours sold back to us is ethically wrong.

The old idea of culture is quickly being changed by the media-orientated version of culture. The despicable fashion industry is a particularly nauseating example. New clothes are produced every season which are useless, expensive and divert the mind from anything remotely cerebal or meaningful. This constant up-dating of "ideas" makes people disregard their hereditary culture and any of the advantages that come with it. The war cry of the new culture is, "To usher out the old and buy in the new". TV culture, car culture, fashion culture, dollar culture: all ways to make us more adaptable to capitalism and its needs. People once identified "culture" as a set of traditions and customs that were characteristic to themselves. Now the word is synonymous with the rat-race, global lifestyle we all "enjoy".

As anarchist communists we want to create a new world in which people are not under the yoke of consumerism. To do so we will have to destroy this new breed of culture which has infected our lives with its grasping desire for profit. If this is achieved people may rediscover what they have lost. Our real culture may return and for once it will be entirely determined by us. In places where it has been used to create divisions we will have to tread carefully. Do we support it or oppose it? The line between diversity and division can be a thin one. But to quote from *Active Resistance*: "Capitalism's greatest fear and threat is a non-consumerist, non-conformist, cultured society".

Hopefully this article will cause you, the reader, to think carefully about this issue which could be of great importance when capitalism is lifted from the shoulders of the working class. Within the early stages of a revolutionary upheaval a period of disorientation may occur. This uncertainty may cause old, forgotten rivalries to surface. We should be equipped with the arguments to counter this.

Dear *Organise!*
Class strugglists used reformist eco-crats promoting themselves through oxymoronic "green consumerism" to dismiss the post-1990 Euro election Green boom as "the salvation of capitalism". Your 'Monkey Wrenchers' article (*Organise!* No. 33, pp7-8) shows progress from the ostrich position, although disinterring Chris "Miss Anthropy" Manes and other conservationist/conservative Wild Earth marginals just sets up new "straw men".

Redwood Summer isn't "unique". Since Judi Bari first advanced the arguments for worker solidarity that Foreman's "humanoids" found so unpalatable in 1990, Earth First! has consistently argued that without a sustainable alternative to corporate pillage, primary resource workers are destroying their own job security as well as the environment. It's not about "preaching at the proles" either — it's their employers that are responsible, capitalists like MacMillan Bloedel who'll continue clear-cutting Canada's rainforest to feed the US junk bond market until it's all gone at the end of the decade and then dump its tens of thousands of employees thereafter.

Until such workers have enough power to determine their own future, the environment in/on which they work has no future either — which is where the IWW come in, whatever reservations you may have about their syndicalism. We can debate whether all this will actually bring about the (green) revolution — but all involved think themselves revolutionaries.

Given your prominent M11 coverage (*Organise!* No. 33 p3), your failure to analyse EF! UK was particularly disappointing. Since its 1991 foundation, the UK movement has grown distinct from that in the US. Lacking indigenous wilderness, UK campaigns have orientated around opposing community to consumption infrastructure development — Golden Hill being as strong an example of this as George Green — and in this they more closely resemble German resistance to the nuclear state or the Japanese against Tokyo airport than US efforts.

Assuming current campaigning conditions continue, it will be impossible for EF! UKers to evade coherent social analysis — and thus the realisation that capitalism must be destroyed, not reformed. However, the tactics eco-activists see as appropriate to this end and the form of post-revolutionary society they envisage are unlikely to appeal to anarchist communists — whether that denies them validity is, perhaps, also for future debate.

Yours, for peoples' power and personal autonomy,
Oxford Green Anarchists

Eds reply: Point taken about EF! UK. The 'Monkey Wrenchers' article was written by an ACF member currently in the USA and was referring to his experiences and knowledge of the US outfit. We're not so sure that EF! UK will "spontaneously" develop an anti-capitalist position, as you seem to suggest. Rather we feel that there must be a dynamic exchange of ideas between revolutionary Green militants and libertarian communist militants in order to develop a coherent, green (for want of a better term) libertarian communist analysis of capitalist society.

The Rape of Eastern Europe

Dear *Organise!*
As seen from my own experiences in Romania and meeting and living with the people there, I see extreme exploitation and hardship for a comparatively underdeveloped (in the capitalist bosses' eyes) region of Europe — the Balkans. The authoritarian regime of State Capitalism (stalinists) under President Nicolae Ceaucescu and his dynasty produced an extreme police state and total control of the masses. This was done through the *Securitate* (secret police) of which there were thousands who were orphans of Ceaucescu's austere laws and policies of no abortion or contraception to produce more workers; these were brought up and "educated" (read brainwashed) by the State that Ceaucescu was their father. They then had a network of informers so that people literally lived in a state of fear. They had to carry identity cards wherever they went, or risk a fine or imprisonment, and needed permission or a visa to visit anyone outside their home town.

There were many other forms of control and in the latter days of the eighties for the so-called "national good" there was rationing of all commodities, the rest being exported to pay off the debts incurred to Russia and the West in the '70s. Life was worse than under the previous outright fascist government, monarchy and feudalism, which the people had not long left.

Under a programme known as "systemisation" the majority of self-sufficent rural peasant villages (especially those that were Hungarian and German) were starting to be destroyed both to produce an urban working class for industrialism (capitalism), to control the people better and to destroy the ethnic minorities (fascism). Much of what I have seen in Romania I can see happening subtly and slowly in Britain by a government totally out of touch with the people with a police to control the people and keep them in poverty and hardship so hopefully they won't fight back. The reorganising of the police into zones, for example (to the Romanian sectors) and the clamping down on benefits, austerity measures and increasing restriction on people's freedom and on what they can afford. Is the future of Britain to be another Romania or Albania — an extreme police state? Not if ourselves and comrades throughout the world can help it!

Now Romania has Democracy and nothing has changed — just a new boss Ion Iliescu (ex-Communist Party). After the so-called "revolution" (for which the state has even made commemoration coins), all they have is a little more freedom to meet people from other countries and to live in less fear. But for most, things have got even worse: massive inflation means that much of the miserly wage (about 50% a month) is spent on just surviving on extremely expensive food, with very little savings. Only an elite minority (mostly ex-communists) can afford to travel outside their own country. This is why thousands of people are fleeing in droves into "prosperous" Hungary and the West seeking a better life. The EC now wants to clampdown on immigration from this region and create a new Iron Curtain, to cut of the Balkans, an area of great poverty and unrest.

What Romania and the unrest of Eastern Europe needs — and there are signs of this starting to evolve in Romania — is to build a national, and then International Working Class revolution to overthrow all bosses and governments, and help create a real future for all, a classless Anarchist Communist society. We look forward to this evolving in Eastern Europe and the rest of the world: forward to the International Revolution.

SK (London E3)

Letter from South Africa

Dear comrades,
It's great to hear from you. We hope all is well with your organisation. Firstly, we must congratulate you on an excellent publication. We've not had the time to read through it all but what we've seen has really impressed us. Secondly, as you've more than likely guessed we feel that your articles concerning South Africa are superb. Unlike most "revolutionary anarchist" publications you've researched your topic and published well informed articles. Congrats. Now to update you on local anarchist activity. We are currently involved in the formation of Anarchist Student Action on the campus of Witwatersrand. It's very much a Catch 22 situation. We can't be constituted as a "legal" movement unless we have 25 members yet as an "illegal" movement we cannot get people to join as we may not advertise. Anyway to date we have 12 members.

R. and E. Anarchist
Revolutionary Movement, South Africa

Eds reply: We wish the South African comrades all the best. They will need much courage and determination in the struggle ahead. The comrades have reproduced the ACF pamphlet *Role of the Revolutionary Organisation* and are distributing it throughout S.Africa.

Review

On the Border of a Police State. £2 54pp. Hackney Community Defence Association, Trade Union Support Unit, 1993.

This booklet is well worth reading despite certain aspects which I will comment on later from an anarchist communist perspective. It recognises police crime and the fact that it is not even recognised as such. It then details the increasing powers being given to the police for political purposes with regards to industrial disputes, strikes, travellers, squatters, football crowds, workplace militants and political activists. It examines the three new reports on the police, the *White Paper on Police Reform*, the *Sheeehy Report*, and the *Royal Commission on Criminal Justice Report*.

The government is looking at ways of cutting costs in line with its general austerity programme. Sheehy's report was opposed by the police for undermining their powers and for attacking the permanency of the job, in line with world-wide strategies of temporary contracts and casualisation. The State wants a strong police force, but at the same time it wants to increase its control of it, and to undermine any autonomous power it may develop. This is rather a dilemma for them, because if the proposals of the reports were actually implemented, senior police officers will become some of the most powerful individuals in Britain.

The pamphlet details ways in which the police force can be resisted through legal support, victim support, investigating the police, seeking redress and publicity positing (surprise! surprise!) a role for the trade unions. The authors of the pamphlet understand that in an unequal society the police are there to maintain law and order for the rich and powerful against the poor and powerless, but go on to argue that the police are necessary because of anti-social elements. We disagree. We think that a self organised working class could look after its own communities. For us, all States are Police States. Nevertheless the pamphlet is useful for showing how the police are steadily increasing their powers.

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.
We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Join us!

THE 20-YEAR economic depression/recession continues with large scale long term unemployment (four to five million plus) a permanent fixture.

This is the political truth that none of the established Parties will admit to. It is a "sign of the times" that although the Conservative government is riven by crisis and scandal (Back to Basics, Health Service cuts, Irangate, arms-for-aid sweeteners) there is no credible opposition which will bring the government down (not that genuine revolutionaries care who administers capitalism). The La-Bore Party has long since dropped any pretence of socialism and vainly tries to out-Tory the Tories ("critically supported" of course by the Left). The racist policies and electioneering of the ruling Social Democrats in Tower Hamlets has shown the nature of their "radicalism". The Green Party remains wedded to capitalism, parliament and legality with their pathetic bleatings about "our" government and the notion that "we're all (equally) responsible for pollution" — thank you, Union Carbide.

The triumph of private capitalism globally, preceded by the fall of the "Communist" regimes of Eastern Europe, has caused the collapse of many British left-wing groups. The Socialist Workers Party has taken advantage of this implosion in their dash for growth, aka never-mind-the-politics, look at the membership figures. The left's main pre-occupation is anti-fascism. They use their various front organisations (ANL, ARA, YRE) to recruit, and plug their counter-revolutionary politics, defending democracy and nationalism. So what real alternative is there? What alternative for those sickened by this rotting society, whose highest cultural forms seem to be Mr Blobby and Blind Date?

The anarchist movement in this country has failed to take advantage of the most favourable conditions for many years and remains trapped in its ghettos. Consistent and untiring propaganda and development of theory are required, as well as the need to break with the politics of the stunt and of localism. A national revolutionary organisation is needed. We in the ACF are working towards this. If you agree with these perspectives, then think seriously of joining us.

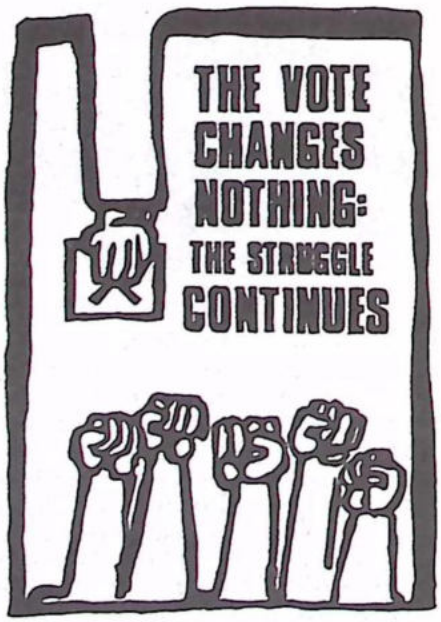
COLLECTIVE ACTION

CONTRARY TO POPULAR prejudice, fostered by both media caricatures and by the antics of a small number of self-proclaimed "anarchists", anarchism is neither "rugged individualism" nor individualistic rebellion.

Whilst anarchists argue that the realisation of individual freedom is central to any authentically revolutionary politics we don't equate this fundamental freedom with the right of individuals to manifest their ego without regard for the social totality. But, more importantly, it is our belief that it is *collective* action which creates change and is essential to anarchism rather the activity of isolated and atomised individuals.

Obviously this is such commonsense that it should not require comment, but so often individualism is regarded as the bedrock of anarchism, rather than its actual opposite. That, of course, is not to say that anarchists are opposed to individuality — far from it — but that in capitalist society individual*ism* is at best an excuse by some to selfishly indulge themselves and at worst an ideology which encourages the most horrendous competitivness and exploitation. Capitalism loves (and sings the highest praises of) individualism whilst crushing real individuality. Capitalism, however, fears collective action. A Trade Union's strength is founded upon the potential, on the partof its membership, for collective action. Its ability to mobilize and control this action is crucial in maintaining its credibility and position as labour broker. Once the threat of collective action is removed, however,the Trade Unions tend to be no longer taken seriously by employers nor members.

The individual can be compared to the finger of a hand. On its own it's not particularly strong or effective but in unison with the other fingers it can become a fist.



The working class, in whatever context, be it the community or the workplace, is more easily dominated and exploited when it is divided and impotent. When organised collectively it has the potential to act in a concerted manner against capital. Although, particularly in the workplace, the individual can engage in sabotage, absenteeism and "theft", even these activities organised collectively (even clandestinely) can be more effective.

Collective action also creates a spirit of combativeness as people realise that, far from being powerless, they in fact have power which can bring about change. Probably the most outstanding example in recent years was the anti-Poll Tax movement. If resistance to that tax had been in terms of purely individual non-payment, of individuals separated from others refusing to pay, rather than in the form of a community of collective struggle, then it would have rapidly collapsed as individuals were isolated and picked off by the state.

Similarly the individual anarchist can only do so much on their own. The feeling of isolation which capitalism imposes on the individual rebel can often lead to disillusionment and despair. But, collective action in the shape of an anarchist group can accomplish far more whilst a national network constantly keeping militants informed and motivated . . . well who knows what we could achieve? Why not take the *individual* decision to take some *collective* action with the Anarchist Communist Federation?

Transport or Traffic

Continued from page 12

"multi-modal integration". Governments agree about the "need" for infrastructure. Clinton has promised to spend $80 billion on renovating America's roads, creating a new high speed rail network linking US cities and developing new technology to expand capacity. Similarly the European Commission is pledged to "the establishment and development of trans-European networks, in particular in the sectors of transport."

The forecast is for the doubling of most forms of transport. In the EC nearly five times as much freight is carried by road as by rail, 12 times as many passengers as by rail. The bulk will therefore be roads. "Intra-modal integration" consequently means different forms of transport will act more efficiently as tributaries and distributors for each other.

Infrastructure is not confined to the industrialised world. In order to meet the demands of International Capital, many governments are pumping borrowed money into infrastructure schemes. Most are centred on roads eg Amazonia (which has the most extensive national water transport network in the world) is being rapidly covered by roads, as is the Congo basin. The Pan American highway, stretching from Patagonaia to Alaska is nearly complete. There are plans to link Alaska to Siberia. If these schemes are completed, the majority of the earth's land mass will have become one continent, with motorists able to drive from Buenos Aires to Cape Town, via New York and Moscow. For the South this will mean further rounds of enclosure, more colonisation with the displacement of people and the disruption of local economies, the sacking of the environment and the dubious benefits of consumer goods.

The improvement of infrastructure in the West is part of the move from manufacturing to service/distribution economies. Goods are shunted ever faster over ever greater distances. As transport costs decrease, competing firms will venture further and further, selling identical products in each other's territory. Manufacturers will look further afield to find the cheapest supplier of components. Workers will commute ever further to work. The result will be less an improvement in the quantity of commodities available and more an increase in travel and traffic. People will have to travel further to work, shop, visit relatives and holiday in less spoilt resorts.

Even the European Commission has admitted the axiom that more roads leads to more traffic: "infrastructure planning should not necessarily seek to promote an increase in capacity, since in certain instances this might boost transport demand and in the long-term exacerbate the problem, particularly in the case of road transport". EC Green Paper.

This damaging slip was withdrawn from the subsequent White Paper. The ERT claim: "The benefits are often widespread while the costs are typically borne locally . . . technocratic designs . . . which ride roughshod over the legitimate concerns of others, will simply founder on the obstacles of local resistance . . . Environmental objections, while important, cannot be simply granted a power of veto . . . The increasingly efficient organisation of those arguing for environmental citizens' rights must be matched by a more efficient organisation of the advocates of change, adaptation and growth."

Operation Roadblock

A national rota of 100 people per day for a mobilisation against the building of the M11 Link. Contact No M11 Link Campaign, Arch 211, Grove Green Road, London E11 4AJ or phone 081-558 2638 - fax 081-539 7569.

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

50p
July-Sept
1994
Issue 35

REVOLTING AGAINST THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BILL!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are streng-thened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for a n a r c h i s t - c o m m u n i s m. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis.

We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

Editorial

Fight the Criminal Justice Bill!

JUST LIKE the poll tax, the Criminal Justice Bill is a flagship of the Government's legislation and rule, and just like the poll tax, this flagship can be scuppered. It was through mass revulsion against the poll tax, thousands upon thousands refusing to pay it throughout Britain, thousands organising and mobilising against it, that the Government was forced to withdraw it.

This time around, in grey Britain, anyone who questions the status quo, by behaviour, attitude, dress, politics or sexuality is singled out as a target. We have already had assaults in the media and the House of Commons on single mothers, beggars and those who dare to mention sex education. Scapegoat after scapegoat is frantically sought out. Anything to take attention away from the economic reality of four million unemployed and the end of the artificially created 'boom'.

Now under the umbrella of the Criminal Justice Bill a whole range of groups will be victimised. Gypsies, travellers, squatters, ravers, will be singled out for attack. The police will increase their powers. They will have greater 'stop and search' powers, and it will be an offence to refuse to undergo a search. The right to remain silent will be taken away. It will now be a criminal offence to stay in a squatted building 24 hours after being served with a possession order, with a six month jail sentence or £5,000 fine as punishment for disobeying. This at a time when the streets are full of homeless and 800,000 homes lie empty. Travellers will be evicted from land they camp on and councils will no longer have to provide sites for Gypsies and travellers. People getting together for a rave will be arrested, with no need for a warrant. These powers could be used against hunt saboteurs, against anti-road campaigners, and in the future against strikers if necessary. There will increased and extended use of detention against young 'offenders'.

Alliance

The Bill is attacking a whole range of groups. What is encouraging about the resistance to the Bill is the alliance that is being built between the different groups under attack. This alliance must not allow itself to be taken over by the Labour Party trying to make out it acts in their interests and channelling the resistance into an electoral jamboree. Nor must it allow itself to be hijacked by one of the Leninist vanguard groups, in particular the SWP, looking for more party fodder. Self-organisation and mass action against the Bill are the order of the day. An injury to one is an injury to all!

Railworkers

THE LEADERS OF RMT, the rail union, are anxious to come to some sort of deal with the Railtrack employers over the signals workers' pay and conditions. Railtrack, actively backed by the Government, is equally determined to make an offer that the union could make the signals workers accept.

Railtrack has hugely misjudged the mood among signals workers by appealing to them directly and bypassing the union. What they fail to realise is the simmering anger there over the pathetic 2.5% pay offer. Many earn less than £150 a week and have to work more than 13 days without a break, with shifts up to 20 hours long! This explains many of the accidents that have happened over the last few years, thanks to the fatigue of rail workers. The depth of anger has terrified the RMT leader Jimmy Knapp into calling for more than the derisory offer, but he and his fellow bureaucrats intend to limit the actions by keeping it to one-day stoppages and not involving other railworkers. But the strikes, if anything, have increased the confidence of the signals workers. They will have to go beyond the token one-day stoppages imposed by the union if they want to win. Equally they must go out to other rail and transport workers, and draw in the tube and bus workers, who are also under heavy attack from the bosses. Signs of this anger among other railworkers can be seen in the two unofficial stoppages in May-June. In Birmingham drivers left their engines for an hour over the disciplining of two workmates, resulting in disciplinary procedures being dropped. In Leeds 150 guards struck to attend a two hour mass meeting when one of their workmates was threatened with disciplinary procedures. They have continued with an overtime ban demanding the reinstatement of their mate. Similarly 1,000 busdrivers struck in late June on Merseyside over the recruiting of new drivers on lower pay and the cutting of sick pay and holidays.

Above: Striking posties join firefighters' march.

Criminal Justice Bill demonstration

Sunday July 24: Join the Anarchist Communist Federation contingent on the Criminal Justice Bill demo at 1pm at Hyde Park, to march to Trafalgar Square. Watch out for our banners and flags or ask for details from ACF c/o London address.

A Manifesto for the Millenium

At the last National Conference of the ACF it was decided to adopt the document presented by one comrade as the basis of a new Manifesto of Anarchist Communism. This is now being worked on by ACF comrades and hopefully should be ready for the Anarchist Bookfair in October in London.

At the Bookfair we hope to have a public meeting to present the Manifesto. It will give an analysis of the current changes that capitalism is going through and will present an anarchist communist strategy to build a new revolutionary movement. Also at the public meeting we hope to have a French comrade of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire who participated in the March 22 Movement, one of the catalysts of the May 1968 events. We will of course also have a stall at the Bookfair where you can buy ACF literature and meet and talk to ACF comrades.

Firefighters

IN LIVERPOOL chief fire officer Andrew Best attempted to impose new contracts on firefighters. Thousands of firefighters demonstrated on the streets in mid-April, joined by striking postal workers.

The FBU, the fire brigade union, eagerly accepted the chance of talks, and sabotaged the chances of gaining more. The contracts were withdrawn but Best is determined that wages are kept down and that cuts are imposed. If necessary he and other fire chiefs around the country will impose this through 'natural wastage'. Firefighters went on to only answering 999 calls and Best threatened a 40% cut in wages. His middle management flunkies attempted to threaten firefighters over this action and the refusal to implement unnegotiated brigade orders. But when they went to the stations to carry this out they met with such anger that watches said they would all be disciplined rather than let one of their workmates be victimised. This was all done on an ad-hoc basis by word of mouth. Middle management were so terrified that they passed a vote of no confidence in Best and his lieutenants and said they would not discipline any firefighter. This anger is not confined to Merseyside. All over the country there are signs of discontent. In Essex five stations in April said they would refuse to answer calls unless disciplinary action against a firefighter was dropped. Management was forced to back down.

The FBU will do its utmost to sabotage any escalating unofficial actions. Unfortunately there are still many firefighters who have illusions in the FBU. Any effective action must involve action outside and against the union.

Postal workers

LIVERPOOL postal workers took unofficial strike action for five days in April against the suspension of a workmate.

Some 2,000 were involved in the action and the postie was reinstated. The leader of the UCW, the post union, Alan Johnston, eager to sabotage the strike, took a plane to Liverpool to address a mass meeting and persuade the workers to return to work. Strikes against the reorganisation of postal services also took place at sorting offices in Southend, Oxford, Bristol and Cardiff.

Italy — Victory of the Populist Right and Neo-fascists

THE ELECTIONS of March 26th and 28th in Italy led to the victory of the right/extreme right alliance led by the businessman Berlusconi.

This alliance is composed of his party Forza Italia, the Northern League and the National Alliance (ex-MSI, fascist). They have an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies, and a relative majority in the Senate. The alliance of the left, the Progressist Cartel, could not go beyond the maintaining of the seats of the PDS (ex-Communist Party) and some small gains for the Rifondazione Comunista (ex-members of the Communist Party, hardliners, in a new party with some of the extreme left). Other parts of the Cartel, the Greens and la Rete (anti-Mafia, composed of social-democrats and radical Christians) gained only a few seats. The Centre (the Christian Democrats renamed the PPI — Italian Popular Party, the Pact for Italy led by Segni, the Republicans etc) suffered severe defeats to the profit of the right.

Below: Berlusconi.

Berlusconi created his party out of nothing in just two months thanks to his economic and media power, using his three radio channels, television channels directly and indirectly controlled by him, press agencies and newspapers. The 'political message' of this rich businessman consisted of simplistic and demagogic statements easily digested by a potential mass of voters alienated by the political establishment and still conditioned to a great extent by the media. The magic word is 'new' and all the political parties are using this when they talk about their 'new' parties on the up, ready to clean up the old system.

Not So New!

But Berlusconi is far from new. He owes his economic fortune to the alliance of the Christian Democrats and Socialist Party that ruled up to recently, and in particular to his 'godfather' Bettino Craxi, ex-secretary of the Socialist Party, affected like so many others by recent financial 'scandals'.

Apart from the lies about newness, the other slogans are 'no to the communists' — actually anyone who has expressed the slightest doubt about Berlusconi — the 'free market' — magic term to mean the law of the jungle and privatisation of public enterprises, in particular health and education, lower taxes, and the creation of a million jobs. In reality only the rich and the professionals will pay less tax; the mass of working people will continue to be taxed on their wages. As regards a million jobs, the Italian economy is in a period of sweeping restructuring which means a cut in production and so a cut in the workforce.

In the electoral campaign Berlusconi was allied with the Northern League of Bossi and the National Alliance of Fini. The League itself is a relatively new formation and is concentrated in the north, above all in Milan and Lombardy. Outside of the usual slogans of 'less tax, more freedom for business, immigrants out' is its insistence that the more productive northern regions should not pay for the social costs of the poorer southern regions, and the demand for the creation of three large regions federated for foreign affairs, defence etc, as well as autonomy for tax-collecting and what the taxes are spent on. So, starting out on the same basis as Berlusconi, the League goes one better and calls for localism of an almost tribal nature. And this with the example of Yugoslavia on the border.

As for the National Alliance, this consists of the fascist MSI and some extreme right ex-members of the Christian Democrats. In its transformation from MSI to National Alliance the fascists increased their vote from 4% to 13% nationally, especially in the South and in Rome where they gained the majority of MPs.

A number of points have been under-estimated in the recent past. The rise of racism and violence against immigrants was explained as the actions of a tiny minority — Nazi-skins and other fascists — when the whole problem of racism is much more widespread. Many of the petty-bourgeoisie shopkeepers and small businessmen — and sections of the urban and rural working class — cast their vote for the fascists, blaming the recession and its consequences — sackings — on immigration, when this was a move by the big capitalists, national and international. Another disturbing fact was that 50% of young voters between the ages of 18 and 25 voted for the fascists!

As for the Mafia, they used the votes they controlled to support Berlusconi and the National Alliance, where before they had strong links with the Socialists. But now the Socialist Party has collapsed under the weight of the scandals and they are looking for influence through other political parties.

The victory of the right was also due to the defeat of the social movements against the restructuring plans of the previous government of the socialist Amato. These movements were very large, but the unions sabotaged the struggle, making sure no general strike took place, and that strikes were either regional, or sectional. Despite a growing movement outside the unions or in the process of breaking with the unions that managed to organise strikes, actions and demonstrations (see *Organise!* 29) it was not possible to defeat the Amato government, aided as it was by the unions.

The victory of Berlusconi is an end result of the process which began in 1992 when the first inquests about corruption in the political world began. All of a sudden, politicians, entire political parties, men considered untouchable, stood accused. And this in a country where scandals, State-sponsored massacres, attempted *coup d'états* had been the norm for decades and where the judges were totally complacent. Now some little-known magistrates put all in question.

This wasn't due to the fairness of the system. The prosecutions led by these magistrates were given the green light because Italian capitalism had to change. The collapse of the Christian Democrat reign and the 'scandals' coincided with changes in the world — the collapse of the East European regimes. The status quo imposed by the USA on Italy, which barred the Communist Party from entering the government and which resulted in a 'historic compromise', came to an end. The Christian Democrat-Socialist alliance, robbed of aid by the USA, faced mounting popular discontent.

The Communist Party, preparing for government, changed its name to Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) going over completely to social-democracy, and dropping all pretence at acting in the interest of the working class, and now began to talk about the national interest. And then the activity of the judges began. The number of Communist officials indicted was small in regard to the other Parties, but in the eyes of 'public opinion' they were seen as part of the system of corruption.

The vote for the right is the result of an inter-class phenomenon, where workers, shopkeepers, youth, managers, bosses are all drawn into a movement where the regionalism of the League right up to the rehabilitation of Mussolini and fascism and the reintroduction of the death penalty are on the agenda.

The whole history of struggle of the post-war years has been forgotten among the working class. Already the magistrates have cleared the Masonic lodge P2 of involvement in corruption and the 'politics of tension'. Berlusconi was a member of this lodge. Thus concludes 10 years of inquests into plots, political murders, unexplained massacres and bombings in which leading politicians were heavily involved.

Movement

The autonomists, the squatted social centres that have sprung up all over Italy, the anarchist and libertarian movement, the workplace coordinations of the base committees (COBAS), all play a very secondary role in this hypermedia hype scenario. Their lack of combativity point to a weakness of analyses and difficulty in developing a revolutionary identity in this new situation.

The principal problem is the weakness of a revolutionary identity and a vision of a new society — Utopia. As a member of the Anarchist-Communist Group of Rome remarked: "The presence in the struggles has never been absent, certainly, but it is trapped, in most cases, in the sacrosanct practice of 'left unionism', limited to local or specific struggles, with little staying power and without being directed towards a social confrontation".

What appears paradoxical, is that the reactionary right are seen by many young people as 'revolutionary', bypassing the radical movements of the '70s and '80s. Even the experience of the social centres, which prolonged to a certain extent this movement, has not succeeded in getting out of its youth and minority ghetto, and has been transformed from a movement confronting the system to one of defence.

Despite this objectively negative scenario, there are possibilities to develop struggles against the attacks about to be launched against the working class, and to point out the false promises of the Berlusconi government. One favourable sign was the attempt by 50,000 anarchists, autonomists and squatters to storm the National Alliance HQ in Milan during a march to commemorate the resistance to Mussolini, which was, however, thwarted by the police.

Information from an interview with a militant of the Italian FdCA (Anarchist Communist Federation) in the French paper Alternatif Libertaire, *and from an article by a correspondent of the Anarchist Communist Group of Rome in the French mag* Courant Alternatif.

Exporting Murder — Toxic Dumping in SA

THOR CHEMICALS — the British owned company notorious for its callous treatment of black workers employed at its Cato Ridge plant near Pietermaritzburg in Natal — is again at the centre of a major controversy, this time involving the import into South Africa of toxic wastes.

Three senior executives are facing charges of murder after the death of a worker from mercury poisoning in July, and Thor Chemicals' parent company in the UK is being sued by three South African workers for damage to their health suffered at the Cato Ridge plant.

The latest controversy erupted when Greenpeace New York and South Africa's Earthlife Africa, together with the Environmental Justice Forum, revealed that a US company, Borden Chemicals and Plastics, had dispatched a shipment of 160 barrels of 'spent mercuric fluride catalyst' at Thor's Cato Ridge plant. Thor Chemicals already has a massive stockpile of imported toxic waste, believed to be in the vicinity of 4000 barrels, including the remnants from its British mercuric chloride plant, which was moved to South Africa after it was discovered that workers in the UK were being poisoned.

Demonstrators from both Earthlife Africa and the Environmental Justice Forum picketed the Cato Ridge plant on February 21st in protest at the new shipment. Similar protests were held at the Borden plant in Louisiana on the same day. Protests by Greenpeace activists in the US have now forced Borden Chemicals and Plastics to agree to take back the shipment.

Earthlife Africa has also revealed that the Department of National Health seems to be acting irregularly by allowing Thor to burn and dump wastes despite its inability to meet the minimum safety standards to qualify for an operating permit.

The Department of Water Affairs has also given Thor permission to dump toxic mercury wastes on its premises rather than at a regulated toxic waste dump. The site is not registered, as is required by law, nor have any written guidelines been provided for its management.

South Africa's environmental organisations are demanding that the government ban all further imports of toxic wastes. The African National Congress has pledged to end all imports of toxic waste into South Africa after winning the election in April, although only time will tell whether — out of line with their performance so far in other areas of policy — they will actually do so.

(Information sources: Norm Dixon, Chris Albertyn and Earthlife Pietermaritzburg).

ACTIVE RESISTANCE

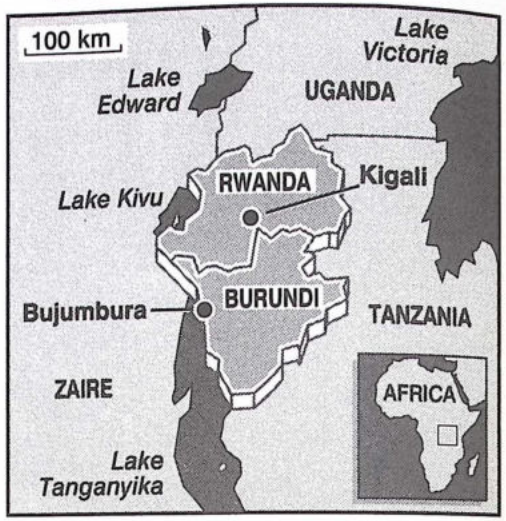
Out now! second issue of Active Resistance, the ACF paper for young people. 40p a copy plus postage. A few copies of first issue still available. Write to London address for copies, bulk orders.

Rwanda and Burundi — 'Ethnic' Massacres and Colonial Origins

PERIODICALLY, RWANDA AND Burundi hit the pages of the Western papers with the same images of massacres and mass waves of refugees.

The journalists fill page after page with their descriptions of primitive tribalism, which they see as responsible for the instability of these two States, with the recurring undercurrent of paternalistic racism which makes Africans into big children who haven't grown out of barbarism. This allows the West to wallow complacently in its self-styled economic superiority, a spiritual and 'racial' superiority. But if we want to really understand the tragic events in these two countries we cannot ignore the colonial period and the massive effects that they have had on African societies.

If we believed the papers, the Burundi region, which is now separated into the two countries of Rwanda and Burundi, always suffered from bloody confrontations between Hutus (80% of the population) and Tutsis (19%) since the beginning of time. Nothing could be further from the truth. Before colonisation, it was a kingdom reigning over more than 200 clans, whose élites were divided into four 'social categories' (Bahutu, Batutsi, Baganwa and Batwa) which were more or less 'superclans' which had different vocations and which competed for the official posts dished out by the courts of the king and the princes.



The arrival of the colonialists profoundly shook this rigidly hierarchical society. First of all the colonialists turned the 'social categories' (not classes in the strict sense) into races, in line with the racialist and evolutionist theories of the 19th century. They opposed Tutsis to Hutus, seeing the first as the race of lords and conquerors, and the second as sedentary peasants. They laced this with large helpings of racialist mumbo-jumbo, calling the Tutsis 'semitised Hamites' or 'Europeans with black skins'. The fact that their researches had shown that intermarriage was the norm didn't change in the slightest their theory that all the African 'races' were not at the same level; the Tutsi were more advanced than the Hutu, themselves more advanced than the Twa (seen as Bantuised pygmies). As to the Ganwas they were arbitrarily labelled Tutsi, because of their social status as provincial governors.

Obscure

This theory served as the base for administrative reorganisation by the Belgian state in 1929. Colonial exploitation required the help of a small part of the local population, and the Ganwa aristocracy was chosen as best assuring social peace. The number of chiefs was reduced from 133 to 35 and the Hutu élite was marginalised, losing all the positions of chiefs, which had accounted for 20%. This wasn't to the profit of the Tutsis, but of the Ganwas and their two aristocratic lines, the Batare and Bezie, who controlled 25 of the posts.

Plural societies

As we can see, to put the problems down to tribalism is dangerous as they obscure the fact that pre-colonial Africa was not made up of united ethnic, cultural and linguistic units, but of plural societies living in interdependence.

The new idea of ethnic identity linked to political allegiances was a result of colonisation. The post-colonial states were founded on ethnicity, which gave riches and privileges to the right group.

After the Belgians left, the two countries took different directions. In Burundi, the Tutsi held on to their privileges, whilst the Hutu took power in Rwanda.

In Burundi, the history of the last 30 years is that of political instability. The single Party, UPRONA, with the help of the Army maintained Tutsi supremacy. The Hutus paid dearly for this — 80 of their leaders were murdered in 1965 (23 of whom were MPs who had assured their majority in Parliament), 200,000 were butchered in 1972. Their next door neighbour Rwanda, was subject to internal struggles between Hutu factions, because most of the minority Tutsi population had preferred exile to death.

The two States used the colonialists' false version of their history. In Burundi they insisted on the traditional superiority of the Tutsi. In Rwanda, they emphasised the stages of Hutu emancipation from Tutsi domination.

In Rwanda a vicious form of state racism was maintained with a politics of quotas and identity papers giving 'ethnic' origin. The Rwandan revolution of 1959-61 overthrew a feudal and colonial regime but it failed to destroy the myth of the 'racial difference between Hutu and Tutsi'.

Things are hardly better in Burundi. If there is no mention of 'ethnic' identity on identity papers, it is because power is in the hands of a minority. A Hutu fraction rules over the mass of the population in Rwanda calling it people's power, whilst the Tutsi minority in Burundi call for national unity to mask their domination.

Turning point

The attack that cost the lives of Presidents Habyarimana of Rwanda and Ntaryamira of Burundi came during a chaotic period.

For the first time, Burundi had elected a Hutu President, a consequence of the democratisation in course. But Melchior Ndayaye was murdered five months later in a failed putsch which cost tens of thousands of lives. His replacement, Ntaryamira, also a Hutu, failed to calm things down, and Hutu armed fractions began to confront the Army, mainly Tutsi, on a daily basis. In Rwanda the state was involved in guerilla warfare with the Rwandan Patriotic Front from 1990. The RPF, talked about its anti-dictatorship stand, but had difficulty in getting rid of the Tutsi label it had been saddled with. The majority of the guerillas are exiles who served in the Ugandan Army.

As for the involvement of the French State, its support for the dictator Habyarimana has never been denied. Several hundred soldiers of the Force d'action rapide are permanently stationed in Bangui (Central Africa) and intervened in the Rwandan capital to protect the 400 French there and bolster the Rwandan government at the same time. Habyarimana was a close friend of the Mitterand family.

Now 2,500 French soldiers are intervening there under the cover of 'honour, decency, dignity'. Practically all the French politicians of left and right backed this intervention. Officially, this 'temporary' and 'exceptional' mission is to protect the civilian population who are fleeing from the East to the West of the country away from the war between the Government and the RPF. This intervention has been approved by the Security Council of the UN. Once more France acts as the *gendarme* of Africa with the consent of the USA and of Russia. To help this come about, they are once again cuddling up with Mobutu, the President of Zaire, with whom they had ceased all civil and military cooperation, and are keeping him sweet with financial contributions. And all this while the dictator Mobutu carries on his own ethnic purification (mass murder) in Katanga against the Balubas, because his principal opponent Etienne Tshisekedi is a Baluba.

Intervene

The French troops are positioned across the border in Zaire ready to intervene in Rwanda. This is in a region where second generation Tutsi refugees live (the same as those who in Uganda formed the RPF) and which is controlled by the radical Zairean opposition, who adopt fiercely anti-French language.

The French hope to kill two birds with one stone, but at the same time risk a many-sided confrontation. Already the Zairean Army have led several attacks on the local Tutsi population. If the French troops move directly into Rwanda, they will create a country of two zones, one controlled by them, and one by the RPF. The French State shows itself ready to prop up dictators in its zone of influence in Africa. Where 'democratisation' has taken place those newly come to power quickly pledge allegiance to France.

New markets

The United States is newly involved in Africa. No longer is this through the funding of anti-Communist forces but as a financial power eager for potential new markets, as is happening in South Africa (see *Organise!* 33), France must now control Africa in competition or concurrence with other Great Powers, with the risk of certain African leaders selling themselves to the highest bidder (as has happened or been threatened by Mobutu, Bongo, etc).

The cons of humanitarian aid — Somalia yesterday, Rwanda today — and the defence of International Law — Kuwait yesterday, tomorrow? — are alibis to maintain or consolidate the zones of influence of the Great Powers.

Deforestation of Indonesia: A Policy Driven by Greed and War

INDONESIA IS TO send a delegation on a PR visit to the European Parliament in April to shore up concerns about the massive environmental damage being inflicted by the timber trade on tribal people in Indonesia and to head off possible calls for wood import boycotts because of alleged indiscriminate logging.

The delegation — made up of a team of businessmen in the industry — will, in the words of Indonesia's plywood king, Bob Hasan, leader of the delegation and head of the Indonesian Forestry Community: "explain to the European legislators at their session in April how Indonesia is taking good care of its rain forests ... After gaining the right understanding about Indonesia's forest development, European politicians hopefully will stop supporting boycotts of rain forest wood imports from tropical climate countries, including Indonesia."

Environmentalists say the timber industry in Indonesia — home to some of the world's biggest tropical forests — has damaged about 30% of the country's 147 million hectares (363 million acres) of tropical rain forest.

Desperate

Pledging to comply with calls by the International Tropical Timber Organisation to ensure all hardwood timber comes from managed forest by the year 2000, Indonesia, which earned $5.21 billion from the timber industry in 1992, has nonetheless stressed the need to balance conservation with its economic interests. Following the neighbouring Malaysian government's line of blaming the victims for deforestation, instead of those holding timber concessions, Hasan has said global deforestation can be equated with poverty, as poor people desperate for food turn forests into agricultural land (nearly one-sixth of Indonesia's 185 million people live in poverty).

Yet clearly it is the ruling classes in Indonesia — in other words, Suharto's family and cronies, including the leaders of the timber industry — who are responsible, not only for the appalling poverty in the country, but also for the rampant deforestation.

The billions earned from the sale of Indonesian timber (to eager customers such as the UK, which will hypocritically buy while going through the motions of expressing environmental concern) both enrich the already unjustly wealthy and also fund the purchase of arms that are used not only to cow the Indonesian people themselves, but also to perpetuate the 20-year-old imperialist war on the peoples of East Timor.

Solidarity

We express our solidarity with the poor of Indonesia and the criminally oppressed victims of Indonesia's genocidal war in East Timor, and we uncompromisingly condemn the suicidal policy of greed-driven deforestation.

France — Mass Action Against Wage Cuts

THE GOVERNMENT OF Balladur attempted to reduce the minimum national wage for people under 26 by 20%. This was to apply only to people with less than two years' higher education and was designed to increase divisions based on qualifications.

Since the end of the '70s, the crisis does not seem to have greatly affected the capitalists, whose profits boomed. At the same time, the attacks by the bosses and the State multiplied and reactions to them were partial and defensive. The social movements were greatly weakened in this period and the bosses and State showed they were capable of maintaining a social consensus.

But in March a large movement of protest against these new measures from school students, students and the unemployed shook all this. Unlike in 1968, the school students and students did not mobilise against a law that affected their studies, but about the future as wage-earners.

This movement had its contradictions. Some students, united in the student unions IUT and BTS, said they did not want to be paid like 'supermarket cashiers'. On the other hand in further education and technical colleges working class students strongly contributed to giving the mobilisation a radical character (especially in Lyon) even if others, less disadvantaged by their social background, were put forward as spokespeople for the media. Also to be noted were the greater number of students — noticeable in comparison to the movement of 1986 — who saw that university diplomas were no longer necessarily a passport to a more privileged social position. Most present students are future wage earners concerned by the increasing growth of temporary and part-time work or are future unemployed.

The government, speaking through the mouthpiece of the mass media, attempted to split the movement by denouncing the *casseurs* who turned up to demonstrations as outsiders to a 'responsible' movement. The *casseurs* (breakers) are alienated working class youth from the inner cities and suburbs who have vented their rage at their miserable existences by breaking shop-windows during the demonstrations. The accusations of the government were well thought out. Faced by a mass spontaneous movement that was out of the control of the student unions and the political parties, the old bugbear of outside agitators was conjured up just like back in May 1968. In actual fact severe police provocation had led to defensive violence which ignited this outbreak of anger. This indicates a very deep despair and anger in French society. But it also indicates the absence of political perspectives going beyond the simple repeal of a law. This is thanks to the lack of a real social movement able to propose an alternative to capitalist logic at the level of ideas and action.

A tie-up with the workplaces did not come about despite a simmering tension in many workplaces. All the same, the potential for this was higher than in May 1968, when a fringe of radicalised students called for such a link-up, but when the student movement and the workers' general strike developed simultaneously but with different dynamics and goals. The Stalinists of the Communist Party (PCF) and the union they controlled — the CGT — were able to sabotage any radicalisation. The latest movement shows that the possibilities for future link-ups are strong. The youth in education mobilised against a law that directly concerned the mass of workers. At the same time, the practices of self-organisation (strike committees, coordinations) were widespread, reflecting the same development over the last few years in the workplaces, where the Stalinist influence has been greatly weakened.

Hijacks

In the '70s the left was able to highjack the social movements and turn them to their own reformist and electoralist ends.

Now, the Socialists have been exposed by their ten years of loyal management of capitalism, and the PCF is discredited by the collapse of the 'socialist' bloc. But the cantonal elections showed they were still capable of channelling discontent because of the lack of a credible social alternative.

Balladur was forced to withdraw the law, and on 31st March 40,000 demonstrated in a victory demonstration. In the aftermath gangsters were accused by the media of manipulating young people in the disturbances at Lyon. There was talk of anarchists and Trotskyists infiltrating the movement on TV and in the press. Certainly at Nantes, where 20,000 mobilised, the libertarian movement was well implanted, not as outsiders but as activists. They were able to spread their ideas widely and make a strong presence. Here, the streets were occupied four times in a week, despite police attacks and many arrests. Indeed, there and at Lyon the situation was semi-insurrectional.

The French libertarian movement has been enthused by the new movement. There seems to be a great determination to break out of the ghetto and spread revolutionary ideas amongst the mass of the population.

As two Nantes comrades noted: "That the anarchist communists that we are, can act and make politics, on bases other than manoeuvres of committees and declarations of principles... that this way of acting and of thinking in concert with the greatest number of people possible allows the opening of the political debate, the sense of collective action, and that far from isolating us, radical, coherent positions, revolutionary positions, can have a widespread response, allow a globalisation of separated struggles, reinforce the social movements and allow the emergence of an anti-capitalist and libertarian political current."

CARMAGEDDON

In part two of our series on traffic (see Organise! 34 for part 1), we look at the social and health effects of traffic. In the next issue we conclude by looking at false solutions and opposition to the traffic system.

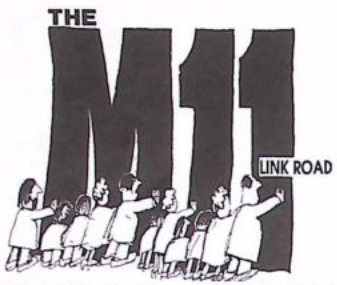
CAPITALISM WANTS MOTOR traffic for profit for the road lobby and for the rapid movement of goods and people (as either workers or consumers). 'Mobility madness' also derives from the need of the business people to commute within and between the zones of power in each city to make business decisions. Cars also promise individuals freedom of movement and are important status and identity symbols.

Freedom

Cars promise individuals the freedom to go where they want, when they want. This is particularly attractive to young people eager to escape the straitjacket of the family. This is a bourgeois freedom however, achieved (if at all) at the expense of others as part of the "war of all against all". Other drivers are obstacles and restrictions to the individual's inalienable right of movement. In practice of course, the net result is more congestion and delays for motorists, increased pedestrian danger and fear (particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and children), and further noise and air pollution. This 'freedom' is also empty because the effect of the accompanying tarmac, concrete and pollution is to "make everywhere like everywhere else". Additionally, as Aufheben point out, the individual's inalienable right of freedom of (motor) movement is enforced and guaranteed by the State (through traffic laws and road construction). The car has everything to say about (for) its owner in terms of identity and status while simultaneously stopping direct communication between people.

Motorisation

Cities and towns of the past were built to the scale of the walking person, and pedestrians, vehicle users, horse, cart, carriage cycle, bus, car, lorry had the same physical access to buildings. This equality has disappeared with the increasing *speed* (and volume) of motor traffic. Along main arterial roads barriers are put up to speed traffic flow and prevent pedestrians from crossing and motorists from parking; car users and bus passengers can no longer use local shops. The next stage is that a hypermarket opens elsewhere killing off small shops and forcing pedestrians and bus users to shop there or go to the more expensive shop on their estate (with the monopoly of local trade). Arterial roads have two functions — to take people in and out of cities, and to be the lifeblood of all the towns along their route, providing shops, schools, pubs etc. This latter function is lost as the barriers turn arteries into freeways and towns along the route become blighted and die. Cities become compartmentalised, area by area. At the core a hostile city centre defended by an urban motorway, its inhabitants gone. It is surrounded by a series of of enclosed camps hemmed in by arteries which have become freeways. People can only enter or leave the city at controlled exit points to



YOU CAN SHOVE IT!

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go to work. The whole is physically connected but without clear communication points and with no social contact. Further out a series of scattered isolated encampments cluster the ring road. Workers commute to the city centre from the outer suburb, and others travel out to ring road factories. Cities devoid of life with traffic endlessly circulating around ring roads. The poor from different areas never meet, leading totally separate existences. Thousands of people live in their own niche within areas, many isolated and atomised in their own homes.

Health

Exhaust fumes (carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons) are a major contributor to global warming and acid rain, and cause much ill health and environmental damage. The average car pollutes more than two billion cubic meters of air in its life. In Britain emissions from car exhausts have increased 73% since 1981; a 1993 government study found 19 million people in Britain were exposed to pollution exceeding EC guidelines.

In 1965 there were eight million cars in Britain; by 1995 there will be 18 million; by 2025 36 million are predicted. Children and the elderly are particularly at risk from exhaust pollution, which causes asthma and bronchitis. Greenpeace International calculates 7.5 million elderly people are at risk and nine million children. Asthma is one of the few treatable chronic diseases which is advancing in Western countries. Children are more vulnerable because they exercise more and so breathe in more air (youngsters under three breathe in twice as much air as adults for their body rate). Asthma now effects more than one in seven children in Britain; the number of young children admitted to hospital with it has increased 13 times since 1960. It is the greatest single cause of hospital admissions after heart disease and strokes.

Space

Speed consumes distance: forms of transport occupy space, and the faster they are, the more space they need. A car travelling 40 kilometres an hour (kph) requires more than three times as much space as one travelling at 10 kph; a single person driving a car at 10 kph needs six times as much space as a cyclist travelling at the same speed. Germany's cars (including driving and parking) commandeer 3700 square kilometres of space, 60% more than that occupied by housing. Each German car is responsible for 200 square kilometres of tarmac and concrete.

The radius of activity of the well off has expanded immeasurably over the last 30 years; that of the poor has changed very little. The emphasis on speed and 'time saving' leads to transport and planning policies where basic facilities such as shops, schools, leisure and work are spaced widely apart. Most people feel that they have less time despite faster means of transport. Those without cars (35% of the population in the UK) and those who do not have access to them during the day, must spend time searching for other facilities, waiting for buses, trains or friends who can give them lifts, or walking. The working class, women, children and people with disabilities are particularly affected. For women travelling alone after dark there are the potential dangers of waiting at bus stops, for late trains (more dangerous after years of cuts due to lack of guards and conductors), or using underpasses which prioritise the motorist at the expense of the pedestrian. Women are also more likely to have the main responsibility for children in hostile urban environments (including escorting duties necessitated by the danger from traffic). In Britain women spend thousands of hours escorting children, at a cost of £10 billion a year (using Department of Transport cost benefit criteria).

Community

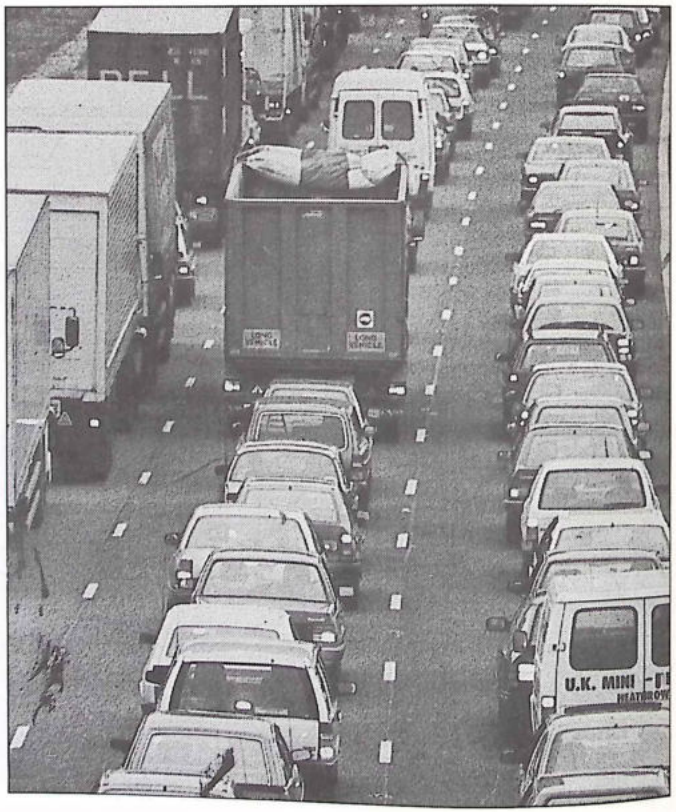
Ordinary but diverse contact is important to people's well being. Traffic affects the number of friends and aquaintances that people have — the more the traffic, the less the contacts. Streets with lighter traffic (around 2000 vehicles a year) have close knit communities where residents make full use of the street — sitting and chatting on front steps, children using pavements for play and teenagers and adults hanging out and chatting on the street.

With medium traffic flow (about 8000 vehicles a year) there is a decline in street use, though friendliness and involvement remain. With heavy traffic flow (over 16,000 vehicles a year) the street is used solely as a corridor between the sanctuary of individual homes and the outside world. There is no feeling of community and residents keep to themselves, ie isolation and alienation. In this process the street is the first to go.

Motorists view pedestrians, cyclists and children playing in the street as intruding on their space. As the volume (and speed) of traffic increases, their attitude becomes more ruthless. People's use of the pavement is the next to go, due to the noise, air pollution and vibration caused. The street loses its attraction to people — children abandon their play space (and adults keep them inside), and adults drive rather than walk.

With heavy traffic residents abandon their front gardens and front rooms in a retreat from vibration and noise. Finally people become 'traffic refugees' and abandon their homes, moving to quieter areas. Poorer people are left behind, trapped and condemned to blight.

The refugees are replaced by more poor people — those who can't afford to buy or rent elsewhere. The street is now deserted and alienation leads to greater anti-social crime. As thefts and assaults increase, people take refuge in cars, putting another twist on the downward spiral.

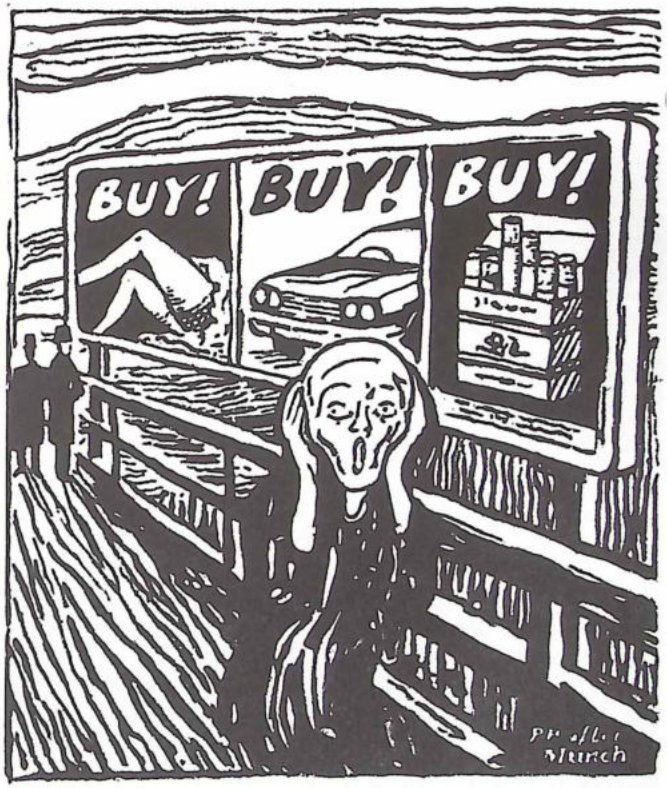


Advertising: The Poetry of Capitalism

CAPITALISM IS A system that seems impossible to crack. Its strength is in the inability of its only opponents (the working-class) to wake up from their induced lethargy. A subtle interplay of media manipulation keeps us passive, inanimate and impotent. For the purpose of this article I want to focus on one aspect of this intellectual lobotomy: advertising.

Personally I find mainstream advertising to be the antithesis of everything creative and artistic in society. For capitalism to sell unnecessary produce it needs to create artificial appetites. It has to stimulate craving for the 'good life' (please note that by 'unnecessary produce' I mean such indispensable necessities as blenders, remote control folding beds and 15-minute car polish and other such items we couldn't live without).

So as a result we have the creation of the modern advertising industry. Around the time of the beginning of mass production advertising skyrocketed into a global billion-dollar industry. With the development of new technology (TV, compact disc, satellite communications etc) advertising found ever more accommodating outlets for its main targets: you and I.



Manipulation

By now I'm sure that one question is on your mind: "What's so bad about advertising?" There are several answers to this. Firstly, advertising is manipulation. TV and newspaper ads entice us with concocted images of sumptuous food, dashing new technology and whiter than white clothes that makes average punters blow their hard earned wages on items that are usually useless, frivolous and, more often than not, have built-in obsolescence just to maximise the amount of profit that can be extracted from the hapless worker. Children are manipulated towards torturing their parents into buying them THAT toy "just like on the telly".

We are mentally bullied, extorted and fettered by advertising. To the demoralised and wary worker advertising creates a little piece of paradise that could be his or hers. The blatant cerebral exploitation of advertising is something that we as libertarians should resist.

That brings me on to another crippling factor of advertising. Despite government claims advertising is still quasi-subliminal, you will often hear people humming a snatch of a jingle or coming out with a

well-known slogan. Some slogans have now become sayings in the English language! These images, slogans and general white noise are deliberately ingratiating, so that we are always thinking about product X.

It is ironic to see that an artificially-created industry, born to serve capitalism's needs, has now become an industry in its own right. Advertising agencies now sell ads for revenue to their prospective clients.

Production

The production of ads is another area for concern. TV commercials cost tens of thousands of pounds individually. On an annual scale the amount of money used in research, production, distribution and release is nearly into the £1 billion mark. The waste of such money is criminal. The amount of resources involved in such ads also defies sanity. A good example of this waste would be junk mail. Millions of tons of paper are wasted annually on this idiotic exercise in futility.

"Sex sells" is a familiar saying. In some "less professional" areas of advertising sexism is rampant. Ads for various brands of pornography are mentally and physically degrading to women. Throughout the industry as a whole, women come off worst in terms of employment. It is estimated that out of the (surprisingly small number of) people who work in advertising (approx. 15,000), half are women. However, this is a very bottom-heavy pyramid. Women mostly perform the roles of receptionist, accounts clerk, tea-lady and secretary. Advancement is notoriously difficult to attain. In fact advancement is impossible to attain if you don't possess a cut throat disposition. In the throes of executive power struggles people are often disregarded and thrown upon the economic scrap heap.

"One day, son, all this will be junk mail"

Ad people have the highest rates of stress-related illnesses among the 'professional' classes. The 'competition' demanded by capitalism even treats its lackeys with inhuman disrespect. Advertising is said to be a people business. So is cannibalism.

Advertising is a method of covering up one-company domination of the relevant market. If a product is owned by one company and is then advertised under another brand name or trade mark, then no one gets alarmed at the economic expansionism of one group of capitalist profiteers.

We in the ACF are libertarian communists. We oppose the use of mental coercion on any section of the population. In an anarchist-communist society we will not live by Puritan standards of comfort, but we will not allow anyone to manipulate people into giving up their basic necessities in favour of false luxuries. However, in the present-day, ordinary working class people, dejected and exploited, find no comfort in simple necessities. They want their flash car, they want their rich food and they mean to get them even if they deny themselves the essential items that they need to survive. Why? Because the all-embracing advertising industry has told them that this is what they need. The new car will make them attractive, the new outfit suit will make their mates jealous and the new lager will make them look 'yuppie'. It doesn't matter if the car does only 25 miles per gallon, or if the clothes wear out after six months. It even doesn't even matter that the trendy beer costs £2.50 a bottle. The ad man has buried himself in the worker's subconscious. No one is immune to this manipulative device. Even the politically 'aware' are just as vulnerable to this brainwashing.

As libertarians we should do everything to change this materialistic society. One step on that road is to reveal the ad man's promises for what they really are: fool's gold.

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The Myth of Labour's Socialism is now out of print.

Poetry and Revolution

THE AUTHORITARIAN MENTALITY has always been suspicious of poetry. Plato saw poets as subversive and wanted to ban them from his Republic, while the Nazis murdered the anarchist poet Eric Mühsam because they were frightened of his words.

Poetry's subversive edge is usually left out of the school curriculum, or forgotten when anthologies are compiled, although some of the earliest British poetry is noticeable for its demands for social justice, and for its praise for resistance to tyranny.

Chaucer's contemporary, Langland, wrote 'A Vision of Piers Plowman', which in spite of its religiosity vibrates with indignation at the corruption of the rich and powerful and their oppression of the peasantry. Langland's vision was written at about the time of the Peasants' Revolt, much like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and *Romance of the Rose*, but Chaucer lacks any concern for the poor and dispossessed — probably why he is taught on the 'A' level syllabus and Langland is not.

Langland's religious background results in the absence of any idea of resistance to injustice, but resistance is notable in the early ballads of Robin Hood which celebrate the outlaws resistance to the Norman Yoke.

Expression

Because poetry can compress and express meaning in a way that ordinary prose cannot, it has frequently been chosen as the vehicle for spreading radical ideas and attacking the rich and powerful. The Romantic poets were inspired by the early ideals of the French Revolution and influenced by the writings of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecroft, two precursors of modern Anarchism. Byron's long satirical poems 'Vision of Judgement' and 'Don Juan' attacked the degenerate monarchy, while some of his short poems celebrated the resistance of the Luddites.

Byron's friend, Shelley, was the poet most closely associated with Godwin's proto-anarchism, and as Paul Foot has demonstrated in *Red Shelley* nearly all his poems can be seen as a direct and sustained attack on political tyranny and economic exploitation. Shelley was expelled from Oxford University for writing a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism*. Shelley's early poetry includes 'Queen Mab', a long work criticising both Christianity and political tyranny, and 'Ozymandias', a sonnet which provides an ironic commentary on the vanity and futility of a tyrant's power. The political implications of 'Ozymandias' could not be avoided as the sonnet was first published in Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* only two years after Hunt had completed a three year prison sentence for criticising the future King George IV.

Two years later (in 1819) armed soldiers attacked a peaceful demonstration in St Peter's Field, Manchester, killing 11 people and wounding over 400. Shelley, inspired by outrage wrote the 'Mask of Anarchy'. So powerful was Shelley's poem that no-one would publish it until 1832, many years after Shelley's death. Nearly all of Shelley's work is imbued with hope, and he openly celebrates resistance, calling on people to "rise like lions".

The attraction that French anarchism held for artists after the Paris Commune (1871) was matched by a similar feeling among writers, particularly avant-garde poets. When police seized the subscription lists of the anarchist paper *La Revolte* in 1894, they found poets like Mallarmé, Quillard and Richepin included in the records. Nearly all the symbolist poets sympathised with anarchism, writing poems on anarchist themes, contributing financial support or writing articles and pamphlets supporting anarchism. Mallarmé even took his support to the extent of appearing as a character witness for the anarchist Félix Feneon, who was charged with possession of explosives during the so called 'Trial of the Thirty'. Verlaine wrote short poems about Louise Michel, the anarchist organiser, who had been imprisoned for her role in the Paris Commune and again for organising the poor. The American poet living in France, Stuart Merrill, claimed that "the symbolist is the anarchist in literature", and Viele-Griffin wrote of "the literary anarchy for which we have battled".

For late 19th century French poets, to call themselves anarchist meant to insist on maintaining their individuality as creators, to reject out-dated rules and to affirm the artist as the only judge of his or her own work. This can be seen clearly in the work of Gustav Kahn, who pioneered free verse and made the urban streets the subject of his poetry in *Aesthetique de la Rue*. His political anarchism was an extension of his literary radicalism.

One of the most uncompromising anarchist poets was Gabriel Randon, also known as Jehan Rictus (rictus is a death-like grimace), whose whole life was one of poverty and suffering. As a 16-year-old runaway he spent six years of his life as a clochard (tramp) sleeping in the streets and in doorways until he collapsed and was hospitalised. This self-identification with the beggars and rogues of the middle ages, his personal experience of hardship and his extensive knowledge of Parisian *argot* (slang) inspired him to create a new 'poetry of the people' and he created a series of song-poems called 'Soliliquies of the Poor'.

To each in his turn the pavements
I walk in silence and in a desert
For 'r'th day the finest streets
The fullest of din and crowds
At mi'nigh' are only great hallways
Corridors open to the sky.

I'm th' Emp'ror of the pavement
I'm th' roamer . . . the mash chewer
Th' stink at nights . . . th' along the gutters
The out-of-sorts, the long-mug
Th' anguish chewer — the talk to himself . . .

There was no romanticisation of the poor in Rictus' poetry. They are cold, tired and hungry. They rebel, but they remain without hope.

Rictus wrote articles in the *Revue Anarchiste* and read his poems out at anarchist gatherings. He refused to compromise or tone down his attack on capitalism and died in poverty.

Resurgence

Britain, like France saw a socialist resurgence at the end of the 19th century, but although it was a socialism strongly flavoured with anarchism, few British poets became anarchists. One minor poet who did was Louisa Sarah Bevington, who had written several slim volumes of poetry before becoming interested in anarchist ideas. She saw no distinction between being a poet and being a revolutionary. In the last few years of her life she wrote widely for the anarchist press, in *Freedom*, *Commonweal*, and for Tochatti's paper *Liberty*, to which she also contributed poems. Working with the London Anarchist Communist Alliance she wrote several pamphlets, which still retain a relevance to our own time.

A second minor poet associated with the late Victorian anarchist movement was the Scot John Barlas, who wrote for the Socialist League paper *Commonweal*. Barlas took part in the 'Bloody Sunday' demonstration in Trafalgar Square in 1887, where he was badly injured by blows from a policeman's truncheon. Bar-

Need an Antidote?

Aylesbury group of the ACF have produced a local agitational magazine. *Antidote* No 2 is available containing articles on Suing the police, Emma Humphreys, The BNP. Copies (including a few of Issue 1) can be obtained (free or donation) by sending an A5 SAE to Aylesbury ACF, PO Box 406, Aylesbury, Bucks HP21 8LS.

Pen & ink drawing by George Grosz, showing the arrest and interrogation of Eric Mühsam.

las is usually remembered for firing a pistol shot at the Houses of Parliament as a gesture of contempt. A gesture for which he was arrested and imprisoned. Oscar Wilde stood bail for Barlas, partly because of a shared interest in anarchism. As a result of his truncheon injuries Barlas suffered from repeated bouts of depression and eventually died in a Glasgow asylum. During his lifetime he wrote several volumes of poetry, some of which are regularly reprinted.

Oscar Wilde is always mocked as a dilettante and jester, but this is the literary establishment's method of defusing Wilde's work. His plays represent a scathing indictment of the morals and concerns of the ruling classes, disguised as comedy, but much of his work is more overtly political. The plays are an attack from within the ruling class, his later writings are from a position of exclusion. *De Profundis* was Wilde's justification of his homosexuality, but it is couched in strongly political tones. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* is an incisive argument for libertarian socialism, but it is the 'Ballad of Reading Gaol' which is his most inspirational work. A poem based on his experience while in prison, it is a powerful attack on the notion of punishment.

The anarchist-communist Eric Mühsam placed culture at the centre of his political activism, fiercely defending freedom of the individual from encroachment by right and left. His socialism was anti-statist and he was a tireless campaigner for sexual emancipation and for prison abolition.

Mühsam's main weapon was his razor sharp verse and he became one of Weimar Germany's most acute social critics. His satire provided a focus for his political commitment. His 'Der Revoluzzer', written in 1907, became one of the most performed chansons of the Weimar period.

During World War One Mühsam was a revolutionary pacifist who refused even to carry out 'alternative labour service' and was consequently imprisoned for his anti-war stand. On his release at the end of the war he took part in the Munich soviet, which was brutally suppressed by the German State. Mühsam's anarchist colleague Gustav Landauer was murdered and Mühsam was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

While in prison Mühsam wrote a play *Judas*, accounts of his revolutionary experience in Munich and many songs and poems, one of which became extremely popular. Called 'The Death of a Red Guard Soldier' it is based on Mühsam's witnessing the death of a young fellow revolutionary during the Munich soviet. It ends with these words spoken by the dying revolutionary:

"Even if you kill me
My belief continues to thrive
I myself may die, but
the revolution remains alive."

One of the last prisoners to be amnestied in 1924, Mühsam returned to radical activity, editing a paper called *FANAL* (Beacon) and now less bohemian and more political in his approach. Well known to the Nazis because of his many political and cabaret appearances, his new translation of 'The International' and his writings which included a popular play *For Reasons Of State*, based on the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, Mühsam became one of their first victims.

On the night of the Reichstag fire, Mühsam was arrested by the SS just four hours before a planned escape to Prague — a flight he had been forced to postpone because of lack of money. He was imprisoned in a whole series of concentration camps and was savagely beaten in all of them. He was cruelly murdered by his captors on July 10th 1933.

Many of the French surrealist poets, including Benjamin Peret and André Breton were involved with the anarchist movement in the 1950s, contributing a series of *billets surrealistes* to the anarchist paper *Le Libertaire*. Their contemporary, Jacques Prevert successfully encapsulated anarchist ideas in his haunting poems. Prevert was a script writer by profession, writing a whole series of screen-plays for the films of Marcel Carne, among them *Les Enfants du Paradis* and *Les Portes de la Nuit*, as well as the sadly neglected full-length cartoon film *The King and Mr Bird*.

Prevert's poetry is sometimes tender, wistful and evocative of gentle melancholy, but it can also be mockingly satirical. In the poems of *Paroles* (1941) and *Spectacle* (1951), he ridicules the conformity and convention of society, attacking the social damage caused by capitalism, while praising the simple joys of love, and the colours, sounds and smells of the streets.

Relevant, effective poetry wasn't just written in the past — it still has a relevance and effectiveness at the late end of the 20th century. English poet Adrian Mitchell helped to provide a focus to opposition to the war in Vietnam with his poems. Utilising the rhythms of rock and roll in 'Zapping the Cong' and the direct lyrics of 'To Whom it May Concern': "I was run over by the truth one day . . .", Mitchell worked tirelessly to give a voice to the anti-war movement.

A decade later Mitchell was pointing at the insanity of nuclear war in 'On the beach at Cambridge'. His poems find targets in the alienation of everyday life, attacking the cruelty of the school playground in 'Back in the Playground Blues', where he likens the cruelty experienced by children to the beetle which gets its legs torn off, but "a beetle can't beg for mercy, a beetle's not half the fun".

The desire for rebellion expressed in 'Fuck off Friday', is linked to his activities supporting the miners during the miners' strike and to his opposition to the bombing of Iraq in the Gulf war.

A second poet who has been able to give voice to the fears and desires of our time is Heathcote Williams. Actor, playwright and sometime editor of the seminal underground paper *IT* (*International Times*), Heathcote has written several book length poems about the destruction of the environment by cars, the destruction of the elephant species, and the destruction of Whales. 'Whale Nation', the first and best known of these poems was originally published in *IT*. The response it triggered, particularly among young people, provides convincing evidence that anarchist ideas are in harmony with popular sentiment and that, (to paraphrase AWE O'Shaunnessy), poets remain the movers and shakers of the world.

The Relationship Between Anarchism and Pop Culture

AT THE LAST ACF conference we decided to have a permanent section of *Organise!* dedicated to culture. As we feel this area is open to debate, we welcome all contributions. *Organise!* editors.

IN RESPONSE TO a letter in *Organise!* 32, this is a positive step to highlight the importance of pop culture to the anarchist movement, particularly within the punk scene.

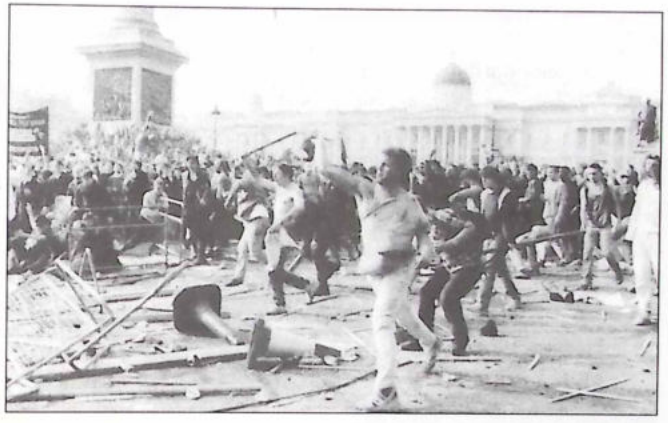
Punk Politics

There is a great deal of scepticism about the significance of punk to real political change, but the massively inspirational work of the Mekons, The Pop Group and especially Crass cannot be overlooked.

Crass were communards and anarchists who had belonged to the underground scene since the late sixties and early seventies and in 1974 were at the forefront of the first Stonehenge Festival. Consisting of five men and three women, not counting 'associate member', poet Annie Anxiety, Crass were initially inspired by the clarion call of the Sex Pistol's *Anarchy in the UK* and the sloganeering leftist rhetoric of The Clash.

Musically, they had more in common with Irish republican band Stiff Little Fingers. But their political stance, tackling such thorny issues as feminism ('Women'), nuclear disarmament ('They've Got A Bomb'), class divisions ('Time Out'), the hypocritical facade of hippies and yippies ('General Bacardi') and, most infamously, the Falklands War ('The Immortal Death', 'How Does It Feel To Be The Mother Of A Thousand Dead?' 'Sheepfarming In The Falklands') showed an ingenuity which went well beyond the contrived posturing of the 1977 comrades.

As punk turned to the record company safety of 'new wave' (a more marketable, apolitical version), Crass instigated what they termed 'real punk', with benefits for anarchist and class struggle prisoners, heavy involvement with CND, squats and their own Anarchy Centres. By the end of the decade, comrades like Poison Girls, Conflict and Zounds had arrived and a 24-hour 'anarcho-punk' festival was held at the famed Zig Zag squat in London.



Universal

Eventually, anarchism and animal rights would be universally commonplace to the punk movement. The USA, Czechoslovakia, Germany and many other countries all had vibrant punk scenes. Indeed, punk was seen as an important revolutionary stance by the youth of Prague and Berlin who were not fooled by the new capitalist strategies any more than they had been by 'communism'.

Berlin in particular saw a large community of anarcho-punk (and socialist skinhead) youths living out their anarchist principles within a squatted 'no-man's-land' in 1991, fighting the police on the streets to maintain their autonomous community. Crass may have split in the symbolic year of 1984, as they often said they would, but their influential anarchist ideals were firmly entrenched in the minds of virtually everyone active in the scene. Punk had provided a soundtrack to Thatcherism and all that went with it: the 1981 summer riots, the Falklands, the Miners' Strike and the Trafalgar Square Poll Tax rebellion. As the music itself grew more diverse, with forays into ska, reggae, dub, folk and performance art, so the ideals and aims grew gradually more sophisticated.

Chumbawamba, a commune-based, working class situationist group, gave the scene its new mentors, as their extraordinary albums, usually revolving around a single theme being looked at from different revolutionary perspectives, gained critical respect, something Crass never 'achieved'.

The Chumbas excel at producing music in diverse styles, from acapella folk to dance, via polka, thrash and ballads. Lyrically, they display imagination and knowledge regarding aid, communism, the futility of the vote, a future anarchist society, fascism, sexism and animal exploitation.

Relevant

By the arrival of the nineties, the word punk could now be applied to a massive range of bands and individuals and had an obvious relevance to the rise of New Age travellers and Riot Grrrls. The grrrl scene regularly name-checks anarchism and situationism and has committed itself (in Britain at least) to a positive, open-minded point of view, which is

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* you might be interested in these publications:

Counter Information — Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of group of same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

CHUMBAWAMBA

largely oppositional to what is seen as the domain of middle-class, separatist bores of mainstream and left-wing feminism.

Within Riot Grrrl there is an incredible network of young people (obviously largely female) communicating, interacting, sharing thoughts on politics, sexuality and lifestyle and pursuing an alternative to mainstream society.

Some now call themselves 'anarchofems' as well as Riot Grrrls, and that surely is an important sign of a serious political edge with their American grrrl friends also moving towards autonomy and generally a fuller understanding that their struggle is the same as that being fought by the pro-choice campaigners, the environmental groups, the anti-racist organisers and, in a lot of cases, the anarchist movement also.

Solidarity

Many are disappointed with the small-minded pettiness, sectarianism and numerous half-hearted phonies masquerading within the anarchist movement and will thus remain Riot Grrrls first with anarchist sympathies included in their 'grrrl positive/grrrl bonding' hypothesis. It could teach the rest of the movement some valuable lessons in sincerity and solidarity. And it teaches the world of music and popular culture a lot about artistic integrity and staunch no sellout attitudes. Within all this, there certainly is some revolutionary potential.

The Friends of Durruti

New pamphlet!

London ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves. This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the Friends of Durruti pamphlet available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p including postage.

Dear *Organise!*,

Having attended a debate on the usefulness of Unions as a revolutionary vehicle (featuring the much vaunted Dave Douglass and some faceless socialist clone) and also following the debate (although that might be too mild a word!) between you and D.D. I thought you might like to peruse this item that comes from the local free paper. Typically the workers are yet again stabbed in the back by the union bosses. If the deal had gone ahead we could have had an end to profiteering bosses of both the management and Union type. A coal mine run by the workers would not need a Union to negotiate being fucked for the fat cat's profits, this is precisely why that bastard Scargill won't accede to the demands of the lowly workforce.

In discussion with my fellow miners I keep hearing surprised disbelief at the events that have occurred, but in my mind I'm not really surprised that this bureaucratic fat cat would rather fuck us all off so that he can keep his poxy job selling us gullible sods down the line.

I urge any of your readers who work in industry to seriously consider extra-union activity at the time of strife with the boss class. It's the only way to beat 'em, to make 'em fear us and eventually to destroy them. I've wasted too much time by having faith in the NUM and by not having the faith in the ability of us exploited to organise ourselves!

Yours in solidarity,
CM, Maltby, South Yorkshire

Editors' reply: Thanks for your letter. We are glad that you share our ideas about the unions and we wholeheartedly agree with you about Scargill. Obviously running your own mine is better than being on the dole, but there are many pitfalls. Many cooperatively run workplaces because they have to exist within capitalism end up working harder and exploiting themselves for less wages because they have to compete against the better organised capitalists. Look what happened when the Triumph motorcycle works was bought up by the workers when it failed. They had to work longer hours and take home less to keep their heads above water, and finally they went under. Unfortunately, the only long term solution is overthrowing this rotten system and doing away with the wages system.

PIT BUY-OUT SCUPPERED BY SCARGILL

He won't release cash

by Sharon Hodkin

MINERS' leader Arthur Scargill has 'killed' an attempted workers buy-out of Maltby Colliery.

South Yorkshire miners had intended to bid for the Northern Group of pits which included Maltby, Selby and Kellingley superpits.

The ambitious plans had been backed by trade union controlled Unity Bank Trust, operated by the Co-operative bank.

Refused

But when NUM president Scargill heard of the proposals he refused to give his support.

He believed the plans were against national policy and refused to use union funds to privatise the pits.

This week a Maltby NUM spokesman said: "He should have listened to what we were doing and let the men decide."

Under British Coal privatisation plans announced last month, prospective purchasers have until 25th May to register an interest.

But Scargill's refusal to back Maltby miners has wrecked the buy-out bid.

"The issue is now dead. They have put our interest to sleep because without assistance from the banks we haven't got the £15,000 needed to register an interest," added the official.

It is the third time an attempted buy-out of Maltby Colliery has failed.

Spunk Press

Spunk Press is an electronic archive of anarchist and related material. It includes work from Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky etc, magazines such as *Here and Now*, *Practical Anarchy*, *Love and Rage*, publications from the Anarchist Black Cross and much more. There are currently 180 items in the archive, which includes a catalogue. If you have access to a modem and appropriate software, or to a computer linked to the Internet, you can access the Spunk Press archive at:

gopher: etext. archive. umich. edu:/politics/Spunk
AnonFTP: etext. archive. umich. edu:/pub/politics/Spunk
WWW: http://www.cwi.nl/cwi/people/Jack.Jansen/spunk/Spunk_Home.html

Music Reviews

***Rage Against the Machine.* Cassette/CD/LP. Approx 55 mins. 10 tracks. £9.99. Epic.**

This band makes the Levellers look like Simon and Garfunkel. Ten stunning and really powerful tracks flowing superbly one after the other — as they say on 'Take the Power Back': "The Rage is relentless we need a movement with a quickness". They are the best radical band of the '90s and a band for the '90s already making a major impact amongst the youth of today, sowing the seeds for the future. As they say again on 'Wake Up': "How long, not long, 'cos what you reap is what you sow". From 'Bombtrack' at the beginning the lyrics and the beat are beautiful: "Don't interfere with the thoughts of a militant mind" and "Landlords and power whores on my people, they took turns, dispute the suits, I ignite and watch 'em burn". Then 'Killing in the Name': "Now you do what they told you" with the response "Fuck you I won't do what you tell me". And many references to brain-dead fascists: "You justify those who died wearing your badge and your clothes in white", referring to the Ku Klux Klan.

'Take the Power Back' criticises the education system: "So-called facts are fraud... See right through the red white and blue disguise, with lecture I puncture the structure of lies installed in our minds and attempting to hold us back". They attack apathy: "But death is on my side, suicide . . . if we don't take action now we'll settle for nothing later" in 'Settle for Nothing' followed up in 'Bullet in the Head' with its attacks on brain-dead people: "Believe all the lies that they're telling ya, buy all the products that they're selling ya". Nationalism is lashed with the lyrics: "You stand in line, believe the lies you bow down to the flag, ya gotta bullet in ya head". Get this record, it's really something.

Senser, *Stacked Up.* LP/CD/Cass. Approx 63 mins. 13 Tracks. (£5.95, although probably more if you buy from Over Price etc).

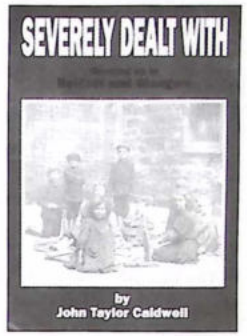
At over 60 minutes this album has got to be value for money in anyone's books. Although I'm not a follower of the singles market I'm pretty certain that this is a reissue of their previous releases, but to those of you who have yet to sample the Senser sound (where have you been?) this is the perfect introduction. From the opening track 'States of Mind', with its bruising defiance of the increasingly oppressive state, through tracks such as 'The Switch', 'What's going on?' and the deliciously tense 'Stubborn', this album continues to invigorate the listener with its unique fusion of metal/dance/ambient/rap. Lyrical content deals mainly with individualism but also tackles such topics as drugs (pros and cons), and the BNP. Side four is a bit of a disappointment in comparison with the first three, but what it lacks in production quality and power it more than makes up for in energy. Overall a stunning album and although I probably won't be able to call it my favourite LP of the year, I think it will remain one of my top three for many months to come.

Book Reviews

Childhood Severities

Severely Dealt With is the first volume of the autobiography of John Taylor Caldwell, the anarchist communist militant whose biography of Guy Aldred, *Come Dungeons Dark* (1988), *Organise!* readers may be familiar with. This volume covers his childhood and early youth spent in Belfast and Glasgow between 1913 and 1927. The book is an outstanding piece of working class autobiographical/historical writing and, considering the length of time between the events and the actual writing of the book, all the more considerable in its incredible clarity of description. Written in an engaging and often witty style *Severely Dealt With* is immensely readable and difficult to put down (I read it in two sittings!). It's a welcome contribution to the body of authentic working class history that should appeal to politico and autobiography (not to mention political autobiography!) readers equally.

The second volume, covering JT Caldwell's subsequent political development and his many years of struggle in the anarchist communist cause, is eagerly awaited and will be reviewed, in depth, in the pages of *Organise!* In the meantime we recommend our readers to get hold of a copy and to make sure it gets stocked in their local library. Copies of *Severely Dealt With: Growing up in Belfast and Glasgow* by John Taylor Caldwell (Northern Herald Books) £5.95, can be ordered from Northern Herald, 6 Lilian St, Bradford, W Yorkshire BD4 9LP.



25 years of British Justice

***Trials by Ordeal.* Irish Prisoners' Support Group**

This book is a publication by the Irish Prisoners' Support Group who are based in London.

Their book is an investigation into the British judicial system's wrongful conviction of Irish men and women over the last 25 years.

The book details the torture meted out to them in prison by the authorities and the measures taken by the government to keep them there. The book is excellently written. Each case is analysed with precision detail. The chapters are arranged in such a way as to give a step-by-step account of arrest, falsification of evidence, torture, trial and conviction.

The book exposes a wide web of corruption and influence. The media's role is exposed via quoting old headlines such as 'Aunt Annie's Bomb Kitchen'. The Annie in question is, of course, Anne Maguire. Parliament is also known to be a major factor in the injustice of the criminal system. The repressive Prevention of Terrorism Act is examined in detail and Parliament's role in the use of the 1883 Explosive Substances Act is also revealed. This Act was used to charge the Maguire Seven and Dessie Ellis.

Various subterfuges by innumerable prosecution workers are described. One example is the comic use of books, found in Noel Jenkinson's abode, as substantiating evidence. The books in question were by James Connolly, Che Guevara and Mao Tse Tung so obviously Jenkinson was a terrorist. (He got a life sentence.)

The police's treatment of suspects is graphic and accurate in the extreme. Tortures include: sleep deprivation, noise bombardment, and immobilisation. The book states that "Almost 800 civil cases were brought against the British authorities".

A whole chapter is devoted to the routine falsification of evidence and the infamous forensic evidence tests for nitroglycerine. One scientist called Douglas Higgs later admitted to the May inquiry that he had been "economical with the truth".

The book never leaves itself open to prosecution as its claims are seemingly well researched. A major endearing factor in the book is that it deals with non-Republican prisoners as well as 'POWs'. However there are some criticisms.

Firstly the book is preaching to the converted. These cases are already well-documented. Practically everyone realises that British justice is in tatters (Irish people have always known how British justice 'works'). The British public also realises that the courts will go to any lengths to

achieve a conviction. The problem is that they don't really care. Most would also be turned off by the legal jargon. Secondly the book's support for 'Irish' prisoners sometimes develops into full blown Republican propaganda. Many of the sources named in each chapter's reference list are taken directly from An Poblacht. And we all know that Sinn Fein would never tell lies . . . or would they?

The book's credibility as a vanguard for all Irish people wrongly convicted is tarnished by the inclusion of an appendix written by two Republican prisoners: Ronnie McCartney and Joe O'Connell. These two get a free forum for their witless Republican politics: "The Irish Embassy should be fully involved, ensuring that the rights of all suspects should be safeguarded". Perhaps they don't realise that the Republic is just as ruthless with IRA volunteers as Britain.

As anarchist communists we should have no sympathy for these paramilitaries who live off the backs of the Catholic working class. Apparently the IPSG have no such reservations.

The book's solutions to these 'miscarriages of justice' are pure reformism. They fail to realise that the criminal system is irreconcilable with Republican sentiment. Their book goes on to say that 'miscarriages' are the result of the British presence in Ireland. They neglect to say that the police, the screws and the judicial system have their own agenda aside from maintaining British imperialism. They have to be seen to be combatting terrorism, so, as a result, we have 'miscarriages of justice'.

Having said that the IPSG are not a proclaimed revolutionary organisation so we should not expect too much from them. Their campaigning is of vital importance in letting the judicial system know that we have not forgotten their injustice.

The book's role is to educate and inform and it does this admirably. This publication could be compared with any Anarchist Black Cross publication. The only major drawback is the support for Republicanism that would discourage many from becoming involved in a justice pressure group.

Posters and stickers

BUNDLES OF THIS poster can be got from London address. Please send a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced a small concertina leaflet explaining basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

Our last two lots of different stickers has sold out. So to meet demand we've produced 14,000 more (anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, ecology etc). Again, bundles can be obtained from the London address, if you enclose a donation.

Join us!

THE LAST FEW MONTHS have shown how close to disaster the governing Conservative Party is.

The La-Bore Party is once again preparing to help administer British capitalism, with or without the help of the Liberal Democrats. It has no solution to the mess capitalism is in, either here or throughout the world. The fact that the establishment media is enthusiastically backing Blair for party leadership shows that they want to determine that the next Labour government has as right-wing an agenda as possible. Not that the other candidates for leadership could be realistically described as 'socialist'. The Labour Party whether it transforms itself into a US-style Democrat Party or remains as a social democratic outfit has no answer to the crisis of the system.

More and more people are becoming increasingly alienated from the system that can only produce mass unemployment and rising poverty whilst a minority increases its wealth, environmental destruction at a spectacular level, war and massacre all over the planet, increasing levels of racism and an ever more arrogant fascist movement, ever more repressive laws against those who question the values of the system in any way, and the appalling, soul-destroying vacuum in everyday life. Many turn in desperation to booze and dope to dull the pain. All around is cultural and spiritual desolation, where hypocrisy, cant and a daily diet of crap are dished up in the papers, on the radio and the idiot-box.

Stunned

Many feel stunned and helpless. At the same time the media makes sure with carefully planned reporting about Eastern Europe and the South that this is the best we can get, so be satisfied with that and don't complain. Yet many are becoming angry and politicised by the attacks of the system. About 20,000 mobilised recently in a demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill, and many of these had never been involved in action before. A counter-culture, to a lesser or greater extent critical of the system, is re-emerging and is vibrant and optimistic. One sign of this is the explosion of small magazines in the last two years. At the same time there are stirrings of militancy in the workplace.

One of the tasks of anarchist communists is to argue for and fight for the unity of struggle and against sectionalism. We are for the globalisation of struggle, for an anti-capitalist front that challenges the system at every level, be it 1) economic, where we fight over how we are treated at work or as unemployed, against the tax attacks by the State (poll tax, council tax, VAT on fuel) as pensioners against the treatment of the elderly, 2) anti-militarist, where we oppose their schemes for war and arms dealing 3) cultural, where we develop a critique of what passes for civilisation in their system and work towards a culture of resistance 4) sexual, where we challenge the oppression of women, the discrimination against gays, and rigid sexual stereotyping 5) ecological, where we challenge their agenda on the despoiling of the planet, and their motorway plans.

Fighting spirit

Dear readers, we think a new fighting spirit is emerging. We have to be there to argue genuine revolutionary politics, to argue for self-organisation and against the Leninist vanguards, who will attempt to hi-jack any new struggle or movement. We need a national revolutionary organisation. This cannot come about without consistent and untiring propaganda and activity. If you share our perspectives, then come forward now and join us.

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 3rd September features and reviews, and 10th September for letters and news.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

SUBSCRIBE:

What they said about *Organise!*

"Many thanks! *Organise!* continues to be brilliant".
Brighton subscriber

Name: .....

Address: .....

I enclose £3 for a four-issue sub, or £6 for a four-issue supporting sub). Add 25% for overseas subs or institutions. Return form to:
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

IMPORTANT! Correspondence for ACF nationally should be sent to the Devon address (see Want to Join box). Correspondence for *Organise!* and for ACF (London) should continue to go to Whitechapel High Street.

Sell *Organise!*

ALTHOUGH OUR sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!*: You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Subscribe to *Organise!*: Why not take out a sub to *Organise!* Better still take out a supporters' sub. Get your friends to subscribe or treat them to a sub!

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Organise! to stay at 20 pages — but we need your help!

FOR SOME TIME now readers will have noticed that *Organise!* has fluctuated between 16 pages and 20 pages for each issue.

When we had something that exceeded the usual 16 page format but we felt should be included, then comrades dug deep into their pockets and financed the extra pages.

At the last conference it was decided to maintain *Organise!* at 20 pages, so we could provide analysis of events on a more comprehensive level. But to finance this we need your help.

Conference also decided to move towards a bi-monthly appearance of *Organise!* To help all this come about we have decided to launch a Press Appeal for £2000. We will be reporting in each issue of *Organise!* on the amount of money coming in. Remember, you can help *Organise!* grow in number of pages and in frequency of appearance. Any donation, no matter how small will be very gratefully received. Please send POs, IMOs, cheques (made out to 'ACF'), gold ingots, diamond necklaces, Van Gogh paintings, used banknotes (know what I mean?) to the London address. You can even send us a standing order to our account. Write to the London address for more details. Thanks to all who contributed to *Organise!* this issue: £100 East London; £80 Sheffield; £10 Northumberland; £3 Brighton.

ORGANISE! BACK ISSUES

BACK ISSUEs of *Organise!* (from issues 19 to 34) are still available from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 20p each & an A4 SAE:

- Issue 25: SOLD OUT!!
- Issue 26: Women & Revolution; Direct action; US Greens
- Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
- Issue 28: ERM; Recession; Detective Fiction
- Issue 29: Debate on the Unions; Italian workers fight back
- Issue 30: SOLD OUT!!
- Issue 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural Laws
- Issue 32: SOLD OUT (You'd have liked that one an' all)
- Issue 33: Criminal Justice; Battle of Wanstead; Bad Attitude; Abortion
- Issue 34: Zapata; Artillery Mansions; Nationalism

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we find lying around.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation. .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

I am particularly interested in the Anarchist Communist Federation's views on .....

.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

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Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:

ACF, PO BOX 4, BUCKFASTLEIGH,DEVON TQ11 OYZ

Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. We have members and groups in the following areas:

ENGLAND
Midlands: Aylesbury, Birmingham, Chesterfield, Coventry, Nottingham, Saffron Walden, Worcester.
North East: Blyth, Chester-le-Street, Gateshead, Newcastle.
North West: Burnley, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Ulveston.
South East: Brighton, Canterbury, London (East, West & North), Twickenham, Woking.
South West: Buckfastleigh.
NORTHERN IRELAND
Portrush
SCOTLAND
Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dundee.
WALES
Lampeter, Pontypool.

Revolutionary Violence

THE ISSUE OF violence within the anarchist movement has long been controversial.

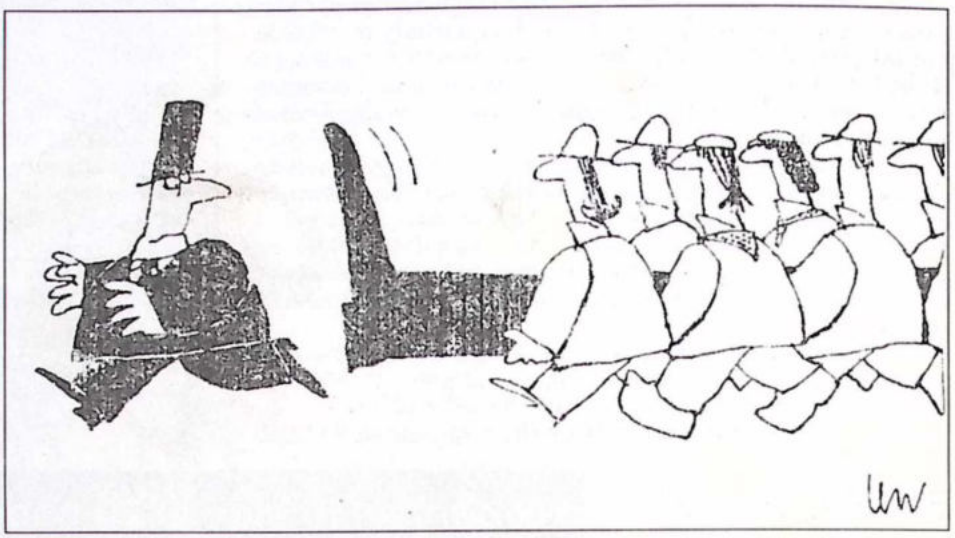
The early anarchist movement associated with Bakunin was openly insurrectionary and the anarchist communists of the late 19th century regarded acts of terror against oppressors as perfectly legitimate. Kropotkin, Malatesta, Most and others enthused over acts of 'propaganda by the deed'. This idea stressed the importance of exemplary actions like strikes, occupations of public buildings etc, by small groups of revolutionaries that would ignite an already revolutionary situation. It very quickly turned into the idea of determined individuals carrying out individual attacks on kings, presidents and capitalists. Given the severe repression in France, for example, after the bloody crushing of the Paris Commune and where open activity was difficult, this was understandable. The State, through the media, were able to so closely associate violence with anarchism that the two ideas became almost interchangeable in the public mind, to the detriment of the movement. Today there are many so-called anarchists who reject the whole revolutionary tradition. So, how should revolutionary anarchists approach the issue?

The first point to make is that it is states acting in defence of privilege and exploitation that practice violence on a large scale. The assassinations of heads of state pale into insignificance in contrast to the normal, everyday actions of the state. In a real sense, states are organised violence. The armed forces, police, prisons and so on are institutional forms of violence used to protect the status quo. And the status quo is in itself violence for it means mass poverty, homelessness, poor health and despair. Should anyone question this legalised everyday terror they are met with the full repressive fist of the state.

State violence

And states are not content to inflict violence on their subject populations, but relish the opportunity to apply it to other peoples. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are perhaps the most horrific examples of this. Some leaders, such as Hitler and Stalin, excelled in murdering millions in both the domestic and external fields of operation. In this context, the bomb throwers and armed expropriators of our revolutionary history must be seen for what they were — heroic, if misguided people acting in self-defence against 'normal' state violence.

With the exception of pacifists, most people accept self-defence as legitimate. To defend oneself or one's family from attack is readily understood and accepted. To defend the oppressed and exploited class is just an extension of this principle. To use appropriate and measured violence against the incarnation of violence which is the state, is no more than to launch a counter-attack. A violent insurrection or general strike must be seen in these terms — legitimate, justified and necessary self defence against the monster of the capitalist state. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge this, necessarily accepts the 'right' of the capitalist state to devour us.



A key point however, needs to be considered, namely that individual acts of violence, however well intentioned, justified by anger, poverty or despair are generally counter productive. Individual terror and group conspiracies are quite easily containable by the state. Rather than inspiring the masses to insurrection, they have generally appalled them, especially given the huge propaganda machines available to oppressors.

Revolutionary mass violence is, however, a different thing if it expresses a determination to overthrow exploitation and oppression. And it takes various forms. The seizure of workplaces, banks and other property is inherently violent since it forcibly removes their possession from their owners. To not do so would be to capitulate to the system of exploitation.

Anarchist revolutionaries defend every method used by the oppressed against the enemy from peaceful and legal protest up to and including violent uprising. Violence as a goal in itself is unjustified and indeed in revolutionary situations working class people have tended to shrink from its use. Not so the state, which on finally securing victory, unleashes a reign of mass terror. Anyone doubting this should look at the aftermaths of the Paris Commune or the Spanish Civil War.

Revolutionary violence is the clear expression of the masses' refusal to continue any longer with the old ways. Sometimes, however, determined minorities, often inspired by Marxist-Leninism, have managed to seize control of such movements for their own ends. The October Revolution of 1917 led to the creation of one of the world's most brutal states. This mistake must not be repeated. Either the revolution is about smashing the state once and for all, or it merely brings about another form of oppression.

Attacks

During the last ten years, the working class has been subject to ever-increasing attacks. Mass unemployment is now seen as 'normal' by those unaffected by it. There has been a large redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, leaving millions in a state of near destitution. Exceptionally regressive taxes have driven millions into a hand to mouth existence. State inspired racist violence is common in some parts of our cities. Given this context, is it surprising that we have had outbursts of near-insurrectionary violence? The poll tax riot was a clear and welcome expression of class anger, as were the 'hit squads' which immobilised vehicles and stood up to the police during the lengthy miners strike of 1984-85. When black people form self-defence groups against fascist attacks, they are justified. When demonstrators retaliate against police provocations they are justified. When a whole class rises up against the state and capitalism, it is justified.

When, later this year, we hear stories of old people freezing to death due to the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel, perhaps those who comdemn revolutionary violence will have a cause to think. Capitalism and the state aren't going to go away or be reformed. They need to be destroyed, and unfortunately violence by the working class is almost certainly a necessary ingredient in this process.

T/SUR/16/15

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

50p
Oct-Dec
1994
Issue 36

PEACE OFF!

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Cinema

And Loads More!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists.
We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution.
In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis.

We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

A Manifesto for the Millennium

At the last National Conference of the ACF it was decided to adopt the document presented by one comrade as the basis of a new Manifesto of Anarchist Communism. This is now being worked on by ACF comrades and should be ready by January. Draft copies of the Manifesto are available from the London address for £1 per copy inc. postage.

At the Anarchist Bookfair on October 22 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn) we are having a public meeting to present the Manifesto. It will give an analysis of the current changes that capitalism is going through and will present an anarchist communist strategy to build a new revolutionary movement. Also at the public meeting will be a French comrade of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire who participated in the March 22 Movement, one of the catalysts of the May 1968 events.

Posters and stickers

Bundles of this poster can be obtained from the London address. Please send a donation, or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced an A5 leaflet explaining the basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

Our last two lots of different stickers sold out. So to meet demand we've produced 14,000 more (anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, ecology etc). Again bundles can be obtained from the London address, if you enclose a donation.

Processed Peace — The IRA Ceasefire and the Pax Americana

"PEACE", IT APPEARS is the in-thing around the world. Palestine, South Africa and now Ireland have all been beneficiaries of the "Peace Dividend" brought to us by the New World Order plc.

We were a bit cheated this time though. No handshaking after talks in Oslo or embraces on the Whitehouse lawn! We had to make do with Reynolds, Adams and Hulme in Dublin. Not very spectacular at all.

But seriously folks. When the representatives of the ruling class, and would-be ruling class, stitch up a deal and call it "peace" you'll have to excuse our cynicism. We have to ask what's behind it and whose interests does it serve?

The end of the cold war following the collapse of "communism" has, with the death of the "red menace" meant that the strategic importance of Ireland, North and South has, to put it mildly, diminished. The possibility of a "Cuba on Britain's doorstep" has receded somewhat. With the disintegration of the evil empire of the USSR the possibility of Ireland leaving the orbit of Western Imperialism is now zero. And hasn't the Republican top-brass dropped all this socialist nonsense anyway?

For some time now the stage has been set for America to step in and play its World-cop role and the Irish nationalist and Republican leadership has been rapidly sliding itself into the ANC/PLO role.

Below: Bogside rioter, 1969.

Gerry Adams, once the epitome of terrorist nastiness is now Gerry "world statesman and peacemaker" and John "the balloon" Hulme may yet make it to Oslo (for the Nobel Prize).

Compromise

The role of the British state in all this is the usual one. Much talk about peace and much carrying on of war.

The forces presently holding hegemony in the British state realise that the war in the Six Counties will not be ended without "compromise" on their part. The Republican movement, for its part has also long realised that the armed struggle, which could probably be continued indefinitely, will not achieve its vision of a united Ireland. Compromise, is, therefore, inevitable. And, without doubt the IRA ceasefire represents an acknowledgement of this inevitability.

Undoubtedly the long-term aim of the most clear-sighted of the British bourgeoisie is a lasting "peace" in Ireland. The price of continued war just isn't worth it and the IRA bombing in the City in '92 has obviously shaken those it was aimed at. If this "peace" requires reunification then Ireland will be reunified *on British terms*. If "peace" could be achieved without reunification then this would be another option, *but it can't, so it isn't*. When we say on British terms we mean that the British state will accept some form of political structure, introduced over a period of time, which will involve Dublin in the administration of the 32 counties. *As long it does not create political instability.*

The trick for the British state will be to offer enough to incorporate Sinn Fein whilst successfully marginalising/neutralising any forces which could jeopardise the "Peace Process". Neither side, the British state nor the Republican movement can be *seen* to have sold-out or to have accepted defeat.

At the moment the Republican leadership is using mass mobilisations, particularly around the Border Roads campaign, as both a show of strength and as a means of keeping nationalists occupied. If Sinn Fein's place at the negotiating table isn't soon in coming, demoralisation may creep in, possibly leading to schism in republican ranks. If this happens Sinn Fein/IRA will be forced to either resume the armed struggle or to liquidate those who wish to.

Paramilitaries

The other force which could jeopardise the "Peace Process" is, of course, the Loyalist paramilitaries. But, since it has been the British state which has generally armed and trained them, they may be less of a problem to "neutralise" than some may think. What will be important will be the loyalty (to the British *government*) of the *security forces themselves*. Since the ceasefire the obvious collusion between the security forces, particularly the RUC, and the Loyalist paramilitaries, has continued unabated. Although the Army has started wearing berets rather than helmets it has not, unfortunately, taken to wearing flip-flops. Places such as Crossmaglen, for example, remain large scale open-plan prisons. Only time will tell us where the loyalties of the various military intelligence agencies will finally lie.

For the Unionists, particularly the moderates (UUP, Alliance) the offer of a referendum, confined to the Six Counties and therefore a foregone conclusion in favour of continued union, is a sop. The non-sectarian land of milk and honey may be far away for northern Catholics, but everything points to Unionist political domination being gradually emasculated in favour of some form of power-sharing in a 32 county set-up. After not-inconsiderable sound and fury the "sensible" Unionists will come to accept this. "Nelson" Adams may have his Orange FW DeKlerk after all.

Above: "Now should I change my first name to Yasser or Nelson?"

Bogus

So what does this all mean for revolutionaries? For the myriad groups of the British/Irish left it's generally been very clear. After years of support, critical or otherwise, for the Irish National Liberation struggle, they have to decide whether to condemn the ceasefire as a "sell-out" or to welcome it. For the various Trotskyist groups, who change their line as often as their underwear, and who do so with such consummate ease, there's no problem. As they have said all along, the "petit- bourgeois leadership of the Republican movement" inevitably "sold-out" the struggle because only the working class can lead the National Liberation struggles to a successful conclusion (under the leadership of...whichever Trots are speaking). What they don't say is that National

they don't say is that National Liberation, even if "lead by the working class", is an impossibility. National "independence" from one Imperialist power inevitably means "liberated" nations being in thrall to a rival power. When the world is totally dominated by Imperialism, the only alternative is *worldwide communist revolution*. Any other anti-imperialism, whether based upon nationalism or a leftist variant of nationalism, is essentially bogus.

So much for the left. What of we anarchist and libertarian communists? Do we support the ceasefire? We have never called for an IRA ceasefire, mainly because such a call puts the "blame" on the Republicans and ignores the *fundamental* cause of the war.

What we can say is that the ceasefire may have effects unforeseen by both the Republican leadership and the Brits. The mass mobilisations, the marches, demonstrations, pickets etc, which the Republican Movement has instigated, may develop a dynamic which the leadership may find difficult, perhaps impossible, to contain or stop. Although this dynamic might not immediately develop ideological autonomy, the nature of the demands (for demilitarisation, opening up of the border) and the means used (direct actions, even if mainly symbolic) may lead many to revolutionary conclusions. We can only hope so and with our meagre forces try to assist this development. One thing is for sure; as long as the conditions which created resistance remain, the resistance will continue. We have to encourage that resistance and, where we can, try to win the leadership of ideas within it. At least an IRA ceasefire means that Irish libertarian activists may have one less body of armed men to dodge. Rest assured we will continue to work towards the day when *all* the guns of the bourgeoisie are silenced, and not with the aid of any Imperialist power but with the undefeatable power of a united revolutionary working class!

Signalworkers — Not Much of a Victory

THE SIGNALWORKERS' ACTIONS came to an end when the rail union RMT negotiated a deal with the Railtrack bosses. RMT deliberately limited the actions only to the signalworkers and to limited strikes rather than an all-out strike.

At the same time the government and the boss class were determined that the strike would fail: the government fully supporting Railtrack, whilst *The Financial Times* and *The Spectator* expressed the views of the capitalists in their calls to sack strikers. The Institute of Directors increased its strident demands to Michael Portillo, the Employment Secretary, to make strikes in "essential" services illegal. Portillo expressed his sympathy with these demands. Railtrack had already shown its willingness to force other railworkers to do the work of the signalworkers during strikes. At the same time they continued, with the help of the media, to peddle the lie that they were able to operate almost complete services during strikes.

The government was determined to make its 2.5% ceiling on pay for the public sector stick. And in fact RMT settled precisely for that. Not only that, it agreed to changes in working practices, and payments for increased productivity which would be paid in advance. These deals would have to be introduced locally.

The only benefits of the strike were that Sunday working was kept out of the standard working week, shorter hours and more holidays were agreed. But these have to be balanced against the attacks that the signalworkers will now receive through implementation of the new productivity deals.

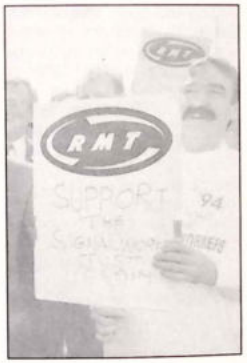
As a result of the previous productivity increases over the last few years, the workload of many railworkers has increased considerably. In some areas two signalworkers now do work that was originally done by 100.

These savage attacks come at a time when Horton, the chairman of Railtrack, pays himself £2,335 per week for a three-day week and when a new Railtrack Head office is being constructed costing £7 million — twice what it would cost to pay for the signalworkers' increase — whilst £146 million was spent restructuring in 1993/4, which led to a huge new layer of bureaucracy of managers, but no extra money spent on services.

The signalworkers have failed to gain the victory that so many on the Leninist left claimed, in particular the Socialist Workers' Party.

The deal was rushed through by RMT with no time for signalworkers to study the small print. At the same time the strike ended with the signalworkers not completely demoralised, as has happened with the miners. But signalworkers will have to be prepared to go into action again quickly, and must seriously think about developing methods of organisation outside the control of the union.

The strike could have achieved a much better result if other railworkers and other transport workers, in particular on the buses and London tube, had come out in concert with the signalworkers, and if the actions had broken free of the deathly grip of RMT, and if support had been built on a massive level in other workplaces and outside the workplaces in the neighbourhoods.



This support would have meant not just talking about the pay demand, but showing how the attacks on railworkers have eroded the service, and forced many to work overtime. From here we could have gone on to the effect this has on safety standards, and the priority that capitalism is giving to road transport over public transport.

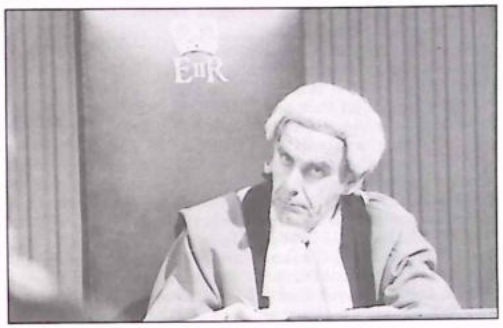
The links have to be shown between the attacks on railworkers, the public transport system and the road-building schemes of the government. Active solidarity must be established between the fights against the motorways and the struggle of all transport workers.

Meet and greet the ACF!

You can meet us at the Anarchist Bookfair and the London Greenpeace Fayre this year, where we will be running stalls. We'll also have a public meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair (see separate box for details). Anarchist Bookfair Sat Oct 22, 10-8, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn). London Greenpeace Fayre Saturday 29 October 11-8, same venue as Anarchist Bookfair.

Keep it Fluffy? or Fight the Criminal Justice Bill!

THE MASSIVE AND joyful turn-out to the Criminal Justice Bill demo in July showed the depth of opposition to the legislation about to be passed by the Major government. We explained all the repercussions of the Bill if it was enacted in *Organise!* 34. Now we look at the opposition to it, and how effective resistance could be organised.



Above: "Are you a squatter, traveller, raver or striker? Guilty!"

The Bill is being directed above all, as many already know, at squatters, travellers, ravers, anti-road resisters and hunt saboteurs. This is because at the moment the principal opposition to the system is expressed through these specific struggles and life-styles. The defeat of the miners and other heavy battalions of the working class meant that the struggle against capitalism shifted its ground. Whilst action continued in the workplace (in subdued fashion and on a fragmented basis) and indeed is now gathering strength again, opposition was showing itself at a cultural level and in direct action against roads. This explains the chief targets of the Bill.

Of course, some of the opposition to the Bill is designed to shackle any genuine resistance to it — a seeming contradiction. But this opposition — which argues for the signing of petitions, lobbies of Parliament and so on — recognises the legitimacy of the system and is only interested in keeping it pleasant. The civil liberties group Liberty, in the handout they produced on the Bill, has the telling little ditty: "Keep it sweet, keep it right, remember, this is a peaceful fight". Oddly enough, this was illustrated by a graphic of a baton-wielding, riot-shield-carrying cop. The leaflet had the advice to enlarge and multiply the poster, encouraging people to spread this message of non-resistance! Another defender of complete lack of real resistance was Steve Platt, editor of *New Statesman and Society*. This boring weekly rag has always supported a soggy right-wing Labour viewpoint, singing the praises of Kinnock, and denouncing the class violence of the miners' strike. Steve Prat was one of the sponsors of the Coalition Against the Criminal Justice Bill, also supported by the "fluffies" of the Freedom Network and the Socialist Workers' Party. Enthusiastically writing in *New Statesman* he whinged on about "Some unpleasant verbal badinage of the kind that denies the essential humanity of the people in blue uniforms". (Tell that to any striking miner, traveller, raver or black person.) And drooled on about "stewards and nonviolent activists who kept the march moving, and prevented the possibility of truly serious clashes occurring". No, Platt(itude) has not become a blissed-out Peacenik overnight, he is merely lending his support to sabotaging the completely justified anger against the Bill.

Attacked

Police attacked demonstrators after the May 1st demo against the Bill, and then after the Hackney Homeless Festival and at a demonstration at Hackney Town Hall against the Labour Council's support for the Bill. Most recently they used considerable violence against the homeless and unemployed in Oxford who were occupying a large empty building as a protest against the Bill, and with the intention of providing both a social centre and shelter for the homeless. They did not attack the massive demo in July on any large scale because of the numbers. They feared the crowd would fight back, leading to a re-run of the Battle of Trafalgar Square, which led to the defeat of the Poll Tax and was a major factor in the fall of Thatcher. The Major government is in a much weaker position than the Thatcher regime, and the police tactics at the July demo were specifically designed to avoid this. This does not mean that they will not attack us where they are numerically superior and away from the glare of publicity, as has been proved by events described above.

Obviously we must defend ourselves against violence from the police. We fail to agree with the Fluffies of the Freedom Network that we should peacefully accept any attacks. We cannot let them impose their pious morality on us. If they try to stop any resistance against the attacks of the State then they themselves are acting as cops. In-

With thanks to Contraflow

deed, attempts were made by some Fluffies to tear the masks off of some demonstrators who did not choose to be recorded on video.

Ironically enough, one of these apostles of Fluffery is rumoured to have received a hefty whack from a police truncheon when he positioned himself between the pigs and the demonstrators.

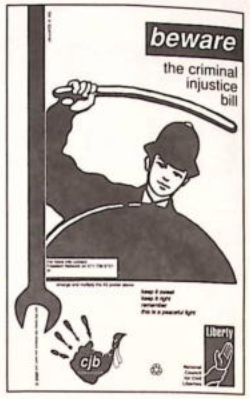
We say that raves, squats, anti-road occupations must not be attacked and broken up when the Bill is put into action. If people fight back and defend themselves, then we support them unconditionally, with no strings attached. What would have happened if mass resistance to police attacks had occurred on the July demo? Would the Fluffies have denounced this? (The answer is Yes!, they would have.) Would they have put themselves in the same position as Militant did after the Battle of Trafalgar Square? (Yes again!)

The Fluffies almost withdrew from the July demo because they feared that the Socialist Workers' Party and anarchists would seek confrontation with the police (indeed they made sure that the date of this October demo was moved forward so that it would not coincide with the Anarchist Bookfair and lead to the participation, they hoped, of fewer anarchists).

SWP

But the Fluffies have nothing much to fear from the SWP. In their own way they intend to keep the fight against the Bill as fluffy as possible. This means they will try to direct the movement towards appealing to the Labour Party and the TUC to fight on our behalf. Fat chance! When Labour enthusiastically supported large sections of the Bill and when the TUC has never done anything but sabotage any struggle! In fact the SWP are enthusiastically arguing that the main object of the Bill was to attack the unions! As usual they've got it completely wrong! Does anyone remember during the fight against the Poll Tax how the SWP said that community-based resistance would be a failure and that non-payment was a non-starter? Remember how they did a quick U-turn when it became clear that many thousands were refusing to pay the Poll Tax? Of course the Bill could be used in future against striking workers — and not against the unions who are there to control any workers' action that gets out of hand — but the main target is the groups and sub-cultures already mentioned. This is because they are in opposition to present society and because the Major government wants to please its supporters amongst the big landowners and farmers, the landlords and the hang'em and flog'em brigade in the Home Counties.

The Criminal Justice Bill must be met with mass defiance and mass resistance — as if it did not exist in the first



place. The law must be flouted and any attacks on raves, squats, anti-road actions etc, must be met with mass mobilisations. The lines of contact and networking already in place on a national and local level must be strengthened, extended and enlarged. Unity of all those under attack and mass resistance are the watchwords!

Riot! An eye-witness account of the Battle of Park Lane

THE ANTI-CJB DEMONSTRATION on 9th October ended in what the media and the Police described as the "worst" riot since Trafalgar Square.

They blamed "anarchist trouble-makers" for the riot and claimed that we didn't have a legitimate right to be present. As if a piece of highly-repressive legislation would not naturally interest us. Liberty criticised some police action but said it was a difficult event to police. All were convinced that a major calamity had happened and professed horror at the violence. (This on the day that Britain joined the US in the military build up in the Gulf!)

What horrified them most was that mounted police were routed and driven from Hyde Park. Later, police repeatedly failed to storm the Park from the Park Lane side as they were pelted with missiles and attacked with a ten-foot battering ram. The reaction of those of us in the park was one of elation. It is a long time since we have felt this sense of class power in the face of the State's thugs. Walking through the police encampment at Marble Arch I was struck by the stunned silence. Their omnipotent self-image had been shattered

Arrests

Of course given time to reflect, it was obvious that not everything was ideal. As in any riot, heavily-armoured police inflicted far more injuries than they took and many more people were arrested. Some camera crews were attacked, but the television-coverage showed clearly the faces of those attacking the police. We can expect more arrests of people identified from pictures supplied by the media. For these reasons we should make it clear that anyone who turns up at a demonstration with the sole purpose of turning it into a riot is highly irresponsible. However, this isn't what happened and we support unconditionally anyone who resisted police provocation.

What seems to have triggered the violence was police reactions to sound-systems being brought to the park. They do not like losing control and tried to stop them. Any police action comes with the implicit threat of violence, but the ravers who were partying would have none of it and drove the police back. Park Lane and the Marble Arch roundabout were blocked and the police eventually let one of the trucks into the park. But they soon sent horses in to disperse the crowd. This provoked the full-scale riot, as demonstrators used the space to throw missiles at the horses and the round shield units and forced them away. People drifted down towards Park Lane and this is where the police were humiliated again as they failed to storm the Park. In the front line a fire breather celebrated by blowing flames at them.

As we expected, the fluffies condemned the attacks on the police with at least one trying to unmask a rioter. Paul May of the Judith Ward and Birmingham Six campaigns was the most blatant member of the coalition to condemn the rioters. We feel that the police's racist framing of innocent Irish people on its own would justify any attack on them. However, many of the Coalition expressed regret that police had been injured. Jeremy Corbyn thought that everything happened as the result of bad policing, while the SWP surprised us by expressing support for resistance to police provocation. What their stance is on people taking a few precautions and coming prepared with masks and firecrackers is unclear, and I heard at least one of their members complaining about the "bad example" set by one of his comrades who joined the riot rather than getting on their bus.

Class War

Class War's stance was totally clear and their leaflet was produced as "evidence" that everything was pre-planned. The media never say that American women who arm themsleves against rape pre-planned their shooting of rapists. Nor do they say that the massive police armoury including shields, clubs, horses and vans driven at speed were examples of pre-planned violence. No, the fact that many of the rioters didn't mask up and that they didn't take CW's advice of getting close enough to be sure that their missiles hit the police rather than demonstrators, show that what happened was spontaneous. Of course the usual rumours floated around of agent provocateurs, of the police wanting a riot to justify the CJB and even of CW being an MI5 front. The reality was that the riot was a spontaneous and totally legitimate reaction to immediate events and to the increasing police repression of recent years. The fact that some people thought that a riot was sufficiently on the cards that they should come prepared doesn't change this reality. Many of those appearing in court were of no fixed abode. (The media added an interesting racist angle by focussing on the fact that two of those accused are Spanish.) The number of NFAs highlights the media hypocrisy. No doubt some of them were squatters or travellers. This legislation will grant the police the right to seize travellers' homes, with violence if necessary, and landlords will be granted the right to evict squatters violently. Anyone who plans this sort of violence shouldn't be surprised when they get hit back. We can expect more retaliation to this and other repression in the future.

Yobs and Boot-Boys

BEFORE THE CRIMINAL Justice Bill has even got through parliament, John Major has started planning the next law and order attack on us.

In the lead up to the party conference he gave a speech in which he attacked "uncouth yobs". The speech poses as an attack on crime and criminals but in fact it is an attack on the working class. "Uncouth" and "yob" are words the ruling class use of the working class. Hooray Henries and student high jinks were not on the agenda. When the middle class see a group of young men with cockney or geordie accents hanging around after the pubs shut then the thought "yobs" goes through their brains. And it isn't just the middle class: women, older people and other "vulnerable" people have been taught to fear groups of working-class youth. But when you actually look at the statistics it isn't women or the old who are attacked, it is overwhelmingly young men who are the victims of violent assault in the street. Women face violence in the home. The popular fear of violent street crime is largely a media invention, the coverage varying with editorial whim and the prevailing climate more than with the levels of violence on the street: you are far more likely to be killed or maimed by a middle-aged, middle class drunk with a company car, than by a working class yob. But this isn't to say that intimidation or violence from gangs of anti-social young men isn't a problem. I have been on the escalator at Leicester Square when a bunch of drunken young men got on. They joked about wanting to do over some beggars and then one of them started to taunt me. One of his companions still had his wallet out with his police identity card clearly visible. And this is the heart of the matter. The reason there are so unruly yobs around is that the ruling class need them. They need them to man the police force and the army. (Yes, I do mean "man".) And if the occasional prisoner gets a bruising, if the odd Argentinian POW, civilian in Belfast, or woman tour operator in Cyprus gets beaten, or murdered or raped, then they pretend it never happened, say it was justified, find someone to frame, or talk of "rotten apples". The reason that *The Sun* and the government react so strongly to attacks on "our boys" is that if you look too closely, you'll notice that they are just the same as the "uncouth yobs".

Machismo

The media are full of positive images of male machismo. Sport, film and TV promote hard, tough masculinity. Hendon Police trainees used to pack out the TV room to watch the antics of Carter and Regan on The Sweeney. They needed their minds filled with violence so that they could go and seize shoplifters or attack striking miners and printers, and suppress all opposition with violence and the threat of violence.

And it isn't just the ruling class's hired thugs who are the targets of this imagery. Neo-nazi boneheads can absorb it and then go out and attack blacks and Asians. If just enough violence happens to scare the most peaceful elements and keep us divided: black from white, male from female, old from young, gay from straight, even Saints from Pompey and Celtic from Rangers, then people's minds are distracted from the real divide: the rich and powerful from the rest of us.

The ruling class also model themselves on the macho culture. Boarding school and rugger teach the young to be tough and unfeeling, and incidentally stop them from having any real contact with their working class peers. And when they have become tough and unfeeling, they can start wars, they can make people redundant, they can squeeze benefits and they can sell arms to mass murderers, all in aid of Capital and the State. Heseltine and Portillo are just the sort of men this system hopes to churn out and which the right glorifies. Kelvin McKenzie, Ian MacGregor and Margaret Thatcher may have slightly different educational backgrounds but their brand of macho ruthlessness is just how the ruling class likes to see itself. For them, hard is good and fuck what it does to other people.

So don't be fooled. It is the ruling class yobs who cause far more death and misery than the most anti-social working class lad can dream of. And beware of the gloss that sections of the revolutionary left put on the macho image. None should cry over the odd hospitalised copper: they had it coming. And if Kenneth Clarke were found stabbed to death one day, we'd feel the same sense of elation we did when Ian Gow and Louis Mountbatten got their come-uppance. But we should be wary of glorifying the same kind of machismo that the current system likes to promote. Is it really so great that a bunch of rich school kids got a beating? Surely their parents should be the real target. The children are forced into a role just as much as we are and a beating is hardly likely to do anything except make them into harsher masters for the future. After all, that is precisely the purpose of their public school education. But that doesn't mean that we should all be shy and retiring. When change does happen, the ruling class will use its hired yobs against us. And no doubt in the frontline against them will be those same law-defying yobs from the working class that John Major has attacked. So we should avoid the type of middle class leftism that pretends to support the working class, but sneers about the "underclass" or the "lumpenproletariat" whenever it sees a group of youths hanging around the street corner. And in the meantime we should support each other in our communities against anti-social crime.

What kind of world is this when people have no choice but to call the police for help when threatened, and where they can set up neighbourhood watch schemes because people haven't been helping each other anyway?

No, we should take inspiration from Derry in the '60s, the mining villages and Brixton frontline in the '80s and the bailiff busters in the '90s and build a real neighbourhood watch which will keep the yobs out even if they are in uniform. Then the only people who ring the police will really be grasses and not frightened pensioners.

UCH — SAVAGED NOT SAVED

THE FOLLOWING TEXT was produced as a leaflet by people fighting to save University College Hospital. The ACF did not have a hand in its production. Nevertheless, we feel that the information and the opinions expressed in the leaflet are deserving of wider circulation and that is why we are re-printing it in *Organise!*

THE SWP doing Bottomley's dirty work for her:
Q: What have Virginia Bottomley and the SWP got in common?
A: Among other things, they both claim that University College Hospital (UCH) has been saved.

About 700 jobs and hundreds of beds have been lost, and the main Cruciform building — which everyone associated with UCH — has been closed. Yet for different, equally-manipulative reasons, the "Health" Minister and the "Socialist" Workers' Party are both agreed on the lie that "UCH has been saved". Goebbels: "The bigger the lie the more it's believed", would have been proud.

What's left of UCH?

Well — now-merged with the Middlesex, there's the administration — really useful if you've had a heart attack. And there's the Accident & Emergency — but that was never planned for closure in the first place. Instead, as with all A & E's without a hospital attached, it's been left without adequate back-up, giving most patients just 48 hours to stay before being moved on. There are, however, 40 or so extra beds for those who need intensive care, who can now stay on a bit longer. Nevertheless, staff are now complaining that whereas before it used to take just a couple of minutes to move such patients to a specialist ward in the old Cruciform building, now it takes up to half an hour to get to the Middlesex because of heavy traffic. What's more the recent death of a six-month-old baby at UCH A & E shows how dangerous it is to have an A & E separate from the specialists (now based in Middlesex) who were previously on site; at the same time the cuts ensured that the equipment for monitoring the baby wasn't working. It looks like the parents are going to sue the over-worked nurses involved, using the Patients' Charter. The much-lauded Charter is used intentionally to blame individual health workers in order to fend off attacks on the real murderers: the managers and accountants who push through the cuts demanded by Bottomley and her genocidal government.

Apart from this, there's a

private wing (great!). Also "saved" (we're not sure they were planning it for closure originally anyway) are the Urology department (much reduced), the clap clinic and Obstetrics. And there's a new children's ward: however, at the Middlesex there used to be two children's wards, and now there's only one — which means that between them, one children's ward has been lost, even though on paper UCH's has been "saved". Similarly, by classifying some beds which were previously the Middlesex's, and by counting the beds existing towards the end of the run-down of the UCH, the health authorities can claim that UCH has lost "only" 70 beds instead of the 300+ that have really been lost. Lies, damned lies and statistics. Moreover, three weeks after Bottomley said the UCH had been saved, it was announced that the latest plan being considered was to sell off the whole UCH site (the land fetching millions on the property market) and to move parts of the UCH to various other hospitals. If this comes about UCH will merely be an administrative label on some bureaucrat's door.

To say all this means the hospital has been saved is like saying that a formerly healthy adult, who has had both legs and arms amputated and is on a life support machine, has been saved. Well, technically yes — but it hardly constitutes the victory the SWP like to make it out to be.

With saviours like these who needs grave-diggers?

During the Vietnam war an American general declared: "In order to save the village, it had to be destroyed". With UCH it's more a case of "in order to destroy the hospital, it had to look like it was saved".

Virginia Bottomley says the UCH has been saved, for similar reasons to the government saving coal mines in 1992 — to stop people fighting together, to reinforce the ignorance and confusion about what's happening to the hospitals and to divide up the fight to save them into isolated campaigns for each hospital, separated from a more general movement.

But why does the SWP proclaim "We saved UCH" when those SWP members who have worked and struggled at UCH — some of whom are genuinely fighting to win — know perfectly well this is bullshit? As in all hierarchies, the individual has to repress their point of view and preach "the party line". During the strike, SWP strategy was designed to gain the maximum publicity and to show how radical they were compared to the union leadership, by pushing for demands that they knew the leaders would not meet. The predictable sell-out of the strike by Unison was the "victory" the SWP wanted: confirmation of something they knew beforehand would happen, but did nothing to undermine. In fact, they had encouraged a faith in the union which they knew would inevitably be betrayed. It was only afterwards that they needed to find a happy ending, so that they could encourage others to repeat the tragedy at other hospitals. The SWP's main concern was recruitment to a self-proclaimed image of themselves heroically and successfully leading the working class to victory, even if this victory is a myth. For them this is more vital than the development of any real struggle by the poor, honestly facing the horrific extent of their defeats and the reasons for them.

The struggles at UCH

During the struggles at UCH the SWP did everything to minimise the efforts of non-SWP members. During the work-in aimed at stopping the closure of Ward 2/1 in Nov-Dec 92, SWP members played as much a part as anyone else involved in the struggle — though it was probably the support of junior doctors which really won this battle, admittedly only a temporary reprieve. In the strike of Aug-Sept '93 they played a more significant part — not all of it helpful by any means. For instance they did much to ensure that the cheerful demos which had previously disrupted traffic got turned into boring routine affairs. And in the occupation of Ward 2/3 in September, admittedly suggested by an SWP member, though broken into by a non-party hospital campaigner, they did much to dampen the high-spirited atmosphere. When occupiers met with a few SWP union stewards to discuss the occupation, the occupiers were told the stewards represented the decisions of the strike committee, and these decisions were: vetting to decide who should be allowed into the occupation, to be carried out by the branch secretary and chair, both SWP members. People would have to book themselves onto a formalised rota days in advance just to be able to spend a night there, reducing the occupation to a chore and duty, killing off the social dynamic going on. The effect of these changes was miserable: a lot of people, particularly locals who visited regularly, were put off from coming. And there seemed little point in giving out leaflets encouraging people to come, if they had to be vetted first. People now felt they were only there with the tolerance of certain officials, and no longer joint partners in the struggle.

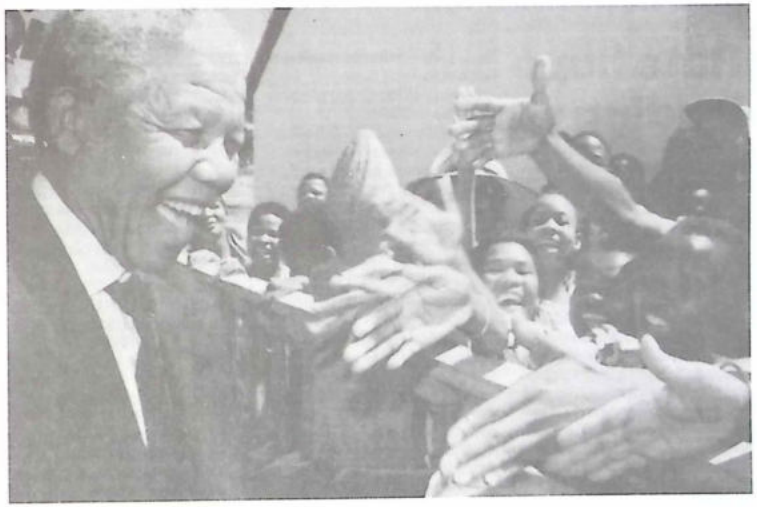
The openness of the occupation, with free debate flowing back and forth informally, was replaced with an atmosphere of intrigue and secret whispering. It was only later that the occupiers found out that these demands of the SWP union officials weren't at all proposed by the strike committee: it had been an SWP manipulation from the very beginning.

The second occupation of Ward 2/3 was organised by us — UCH Community Action Committee — without, unfortunately, a strike at UCH, and completely independently of any political party. We had hoped to extend the occupation of one ward by getting loads of people back from a TUC Health Service demo on November 20th. We failed, even though the occupation took nearly three weeks to be evicted. During this time, the SWP were even less supportive than the rest of the media — the occupation only got a mention after the eviction. We could never, of course, pretend that "we saved UCH" — not just because it hasn't been saved, but, more vitally, because if UCH had been saved it could not have been down to us, but due to a more general and much more combative movement, involving a considerably greater section of the working class than the few people who initiated the occupation. Unlike the SWP, we have no pretensions to being an indispensible vanguard, able to win victories on our own. And, of course, UCH has been, by and large, a defeat, and to ignore that is to confuse and demoralise any chance of a fightback, which is where the SWP and Bottomley have so much in common.

If a fight is to develop to save the hospitals or to stop the horrific attacks on the poor, it will not only have to bypass the parties and unions, but attack them as enemies and obstacles to our struggle. Our health and our lives can not be "saved" by the professional liars of the Left, Right or Centre, but only by ourselves organising not just an organisation with a name on a banner or logo on a leaflet, which is just an image, but organising specific actions and critiques, correcting our failures and weaknesses.

UCH Community Action Committee, c/o BM CRL, London WC1N 3XX.

THE WORKING CLASS AGAINST THE ANC



Above: Mandela — not so popular now.

WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY argued in the pages of *Organise!* that the ANC was an authoritarian, pro-capitalist organisation and that the mass of the population in South Africa, the working class of town and countryside and the poor, could expect nothing from the new regime.

As we said in *Organise!* 33: "The new regime that is being created will also face trouble from amongst the black industrial working class and from the urban and rural poor . . ."

The first signs of this opposition erupted with the strikes that broke out in June and accelerated by late July. In fact the expectations of the working class are high, with more strikes this year so far than any year since 1987, with nine million days lost in strikes. These strikes involved all the important sectors of the South African economy — mining, metal, telecommunications, transport, post, health service and retail. The strikes in the major industries were preceded by 48 different disputes amongst catering, metal, paper, oil, municipal and court workers. These disputes in the working class even set off a strike amongst the police of the ex-homeland Kwazulu! One of the most important of these strikes was the Pick 'n Pay retail chain where a national strike of 20,000 workers took place. Workers occupied the stores defying court orders and police actions. Pick 'n Pay workers were fighting for a 229 rand monthly increase, derisory when one considers that many are on R200 a week. This compares to the daily income of R1,000 for the Pick 'n Pay bosses, who made vast profits under apartheid, and offered their employees a laughable R175 over a 16-month period. But the strikers were also fighting against the racist practices of Pick 'n Pay, which tries to sell itself as an enlightened employer.

On 13-14 July police attacked the strikers with stun

grenades, rubber bullets, tear gas, batons and police dogs. It is significant that the apartheid regime very rarely used stun grenades against strikers, whereas in their first confrontation with the working class the ANC-led regime used it immediately. In further attacks on the strikers the police arrested 800.

The new regime is a government of "National Unity" between the ANC and the old rulers of the Nationalist Party. In this new regime unity is indeed forged — between the new black ruling class and the old white ruling class. Junior partners in this government are the long-time allies of the ANC, the Stalinist South African Communist Party, who will attempt to control the working class to the benefit of the regime, through their influence in both the union bureaucracies and among many ordinary working class people.

It is highly significant that the Minister of Police, Sydney Mufamadi, is a SACP leader and a former Assistant General Secretary of the union COSATU, which has an alliance with the ANC and SACP, and to which the strikers belong! In fact not one minister or MP having membership in the ANC, SACP or COSATU supported the strike, whilst ANC and SACP ministers said that the violence was caused by the strikers. As to the union leaders, the attitude of Enoch Godongwana of the metal-workers union NUMSA, a component of COSATU, was indicative. He sang the praises of "orderly strikes" completely under the control of the union, with "normal" collective bargaining. This was a side-swipe at the direct action tactics of the Pick 'n Pay workers. Despite these attempts by the unions to shackle workers, direct action tactics have continued with the recent lorry-drivers' strikes, where road blocks were set up by the strikers.

Silent

Mandela has already warned that industrial action would harm the prospects of foreign investment. On 18 July he hurriedly met with his old ally Sam Shilowa, General Secretary of COSATU. The following day, union leaders lowered the wage demand to R196 over 15 months, which is a 30% drop and comes close to the bosses' offer, the difference being a measly R5.90 per week. The bosses refused to accept and under pressure from the strikers, the union leaders were forced to revert to the original demand. Soon after this, the union settled for the lower offer!

The Communist Party remained silent on the strike until after Mandela had tried to end it, only then to come out in support of the strikers. This of course means nothing with its members serving in the government and controlling the police which brutally attacked the workers.

The ANC-led regime has already planned its repression against any opposition from the mass of the population with its retention of detention without trial, and the taking over of broadcasting by ANC hacks. Already ANC, SACP and COSATU ministers are enriching themselves and living in lavish style. Even before the election, Peter Mokaba, the former head of the ANC youth wing, was attempting to extort from the Miss South Africa beauty contest, a big money-spinner for white capitalists. He said that the contest was biased against blacks (Yes, it was, but why should black women feel any more liberated by being allowed to participate in this cattle market?) and demanded £50,000 to be paid into a trust fund run by him and a business partner. This was dropped after the white capitalists complained over Mokaba's head to an ANC superior. Since then, Mokaba has seized control of this degrading event to line his own pockets.

Thugs

Once the ANC and its allies in SACP and COSATU came to power they made sure they awarded themselves huge wage rises. Mandela got R784,350, cabinet ministers R470,000 and MPs R193,200 compared to average black working class wages of R8000 a year. Other signs of the ANC intention to exploit and repress working people was its adoption of the military dictators of the former homelands of Transkei and Venda, General Bantu Holomisa and Brigadier Gabriel Ramushwana, who served the apartheid regime faithfully, and who were placed on the ANC electoral list. Tokyo Sexwale, former high-up in the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, and implicated in torture of dissidents, is now Premier of the new PWV province around Johannesburg. For her part Winnie Mandela has manoeuvred away from any repercussions over the murders committed by her and her bodyguard of thugs and is now nicely ensconced as deputy minister of arts, culture, science and technology! She has bought a huge mansion in a wealthy part of Cape Town, and the air tickets and luxury accommodation of her gang of thugs are paid for out of taxes. Now, under mass popular pressure, Mandela has been forced to make a statement that he will reduce ministers' salaries.

The first budget passed by the new government retained VAT on basic foodstuffs, which was a great burden for the working class and which the ANC had promised to abolish. Company tax was reduced, despite enterprises like Anglo-American increasing their profits by 23%.

Not only in the workplace and the streets did the working class challenge the old order. The homeless began to act with squatting and occupation of the land. Johannesburg City Council counter-attacked by bulldozing one of the squatter camps on the outskirts of town on the coldest night of the year. The Minister of Housing, Joe Slovo, the strongman white leader of the SACP, condemned land occupations and said that workers' families had to join the housing queues and that squatters were being manipulated by "outside forces"! This statement should be viewed in the light of 1.3 million homeless, massive overcrowding and that fact that the much promised housing programme promised by Slovo has led to *one* house being built. And this while a massive Olympic stadium is being built in Johannesburg. Some of Slovo's chums in the police came out with the pathetic statement that these squatters' actions were instigated by Nigerian drugs barons!

Unlikely

This brings us to the key component of the electoral package promised by the ANC — the Reconstruction and Development Programme(RDP). This set targets of, for example, one million homes being built, redistributing farmland, providing water and electricity to townships and rural areas over a five-year term. This would cost an estimated R135 billion rather than the R39 billion estimated by the ANC. Considering their promises to the IMF, World Bank, and big business, and the ANC decision not to tax the rich, as well as their pledge to keep State spending in check, these promises seem highly unlikely. Jay Naidoo, ex-COSATU leader and now Minister in charge of the RDP, is urging workers to show restraint and remember the ANC's obligations to the World Bank. At the same time, Joe Modise, ex-guerilla leader and now Minister of Defence, backed up by the former Umkhonto leader Ronnie Kasrils, a leading Stalinist, are urging that the Army should be built up. The budget on security — which includes the Army and police — was increased by 10%, which means that this equals all of the budget set aside for the RDP. Meanwhile Mandela is urging that arms production be increased so that profits can be made from the international arms trade.

This process of sell-out is not confined to the upper echelons of the ANC. Many trade union organisers have been given jobs in personnel management by the bosses, whilst many others have got well-paid jobs in the many government bodies and committees.

The euphoria that brought the ANC to power is evaporating and many working class people, who voted them in, are beginning to question their politics. The Communist Party has suffered as well, with internal dissent and the expulsion of some old-time Stalinists, who didn't want to adapt so readily to the SACP's new tactics. In Natal, Harry Gwala, a local leader, was thrown out of the Party after the election. He had criticised the deal that the ANC and SACP had struck with the right-wing tribalists of Inkatha in Natal. This involved fixing the vote there so that Inkatha got a (false) majority, and then fixing up power-sharing with them in the province. It may well be that the SACP's participation in the government may seriously undermine it. We hope so. The SACP is the last Stalinist Party in the world that was growing and recruiting amongst the working class in the run-up to the election, at a time when all others in the world were disintegrating. The foundering of the SACP could open up the way to working class self-organisation. But capitalism always has one last line of defence to fool the working class — the extreme left. Already several British Trotskyist groups have set up branches of their organisation in South Africa — these include the Socialist Workers' Party, Workers' Press and Militant. All of these groups enthusiastically supported a vote by the black South African working class for the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance, suddenly discovering after the election that this alliance was betraying the working class. From singing the praises of the ANC to denouncing it was very easy for these slippery advocates of "critical support" for every repressive, anti-working class regime like Iran and Iraq. Total amnesia on supporting a vote for the ANC is now widespread. These outfits are as much capitalist rackets as the ANC and SACP — they wish to come to power at the expense of the working class.

The small numbers of anarchists in South Africa must seriously consider the questions of organisation and strategy. They must orientate themselves to the mass struggles of the black working class — be it in the workplace or in the homeless struggles — and to the construction of a specific anarchist communist organisation. They must clearly and loudly call for the development of a mass movement based on self-organisation. To remain in a self-imposed ghetto now will be a luxury that they will not long be able to afford.

Below: Shoprite workers go into action.

Spread anarchist ideas through the Arab world!

AS WE MENTIONED in *Organise!* 34 the comrades of Al Badil al Taharrouri in Lebanon have completed the translation into Arabic of *Anarchism.* This book is considered by many to be the best introduction to class struggle anarchism, and was written by the veteran libertarian communist Daniel Guerin. The translation, with notes by George Saad, has already been processed on a Macintosh, and now the comrades need to pay for the cost of printing. 2,000 copies will be distributed in Lebanon and the other Arab countries whilst another 2,000 will be distributed in Europe amongst Arab workers there. Anyone wishing to make donations to this important project should send IMOs etc made payable to Agora 2000 via BP 177, 75967 Paris cedex 20, France.

Unholy Holy Alliance

THE RECENT UN Population Conference in Cairo highlighted the increasing determination of religious leaders to dictate morality. The Vatican teamed up with the mullahs of Islam in an attempt to squash any move towards making contraception more readily available and to prevent the conference taking a pro-abortion stance.

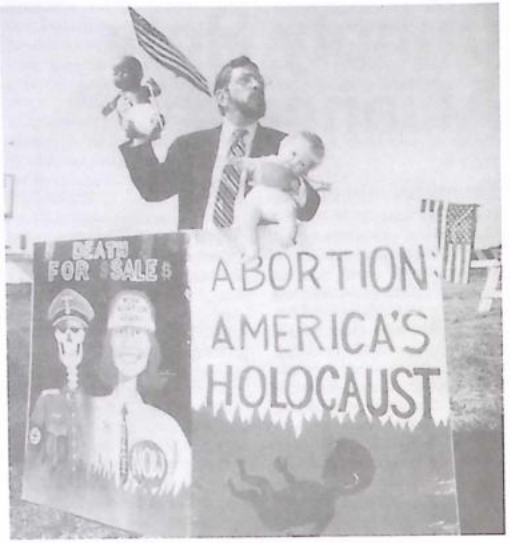
The conference itself had as its supposed aims the recognition that limited population growth is necessary for economic development and that this must be accompanied by the "empowerment of women". President Clinton said his aim was to make family planning available to every woman in the world by the year 2000.

However, it is doubtful whether western governments are motivated by a genuine concern for the people of the Third World, especially women. Rather, it is a question of the West's fear of the world instability that could result from increases in population in countries that have high levels of poverty. The worry is that the West will be "swamped" by refugees, the number of whom on a world scale has already increased from five to 15 million in the past 15 years. The emphasis on population control is thus a desperate move to contain the problems of poverty within the Third World itself, without the West having to spend much money on aid.

Mutilation

The Muslim countries are aware of the real western motives and Iraq, the Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan used this as an excuse to pull out of the conference. However it is a mistake to see this resistance to western interference as progressive in any sense. Their concern to preserve their "cultural and religious identity" is just a way of maintaining values and practices that are some of the most repressive in the world. In the Sudan, genital mutilation of women is still widespread and women in Saudi Arabia may as well not exist in terms of public life. The governments of these Muslim countries' main reason for attacking the conference is their hostility to the idea of "empowering women". They are worried that freely-available contraception will lead to "promiscuity" and the decline of the family, the male-dominated institution that makes sure women are kept in their place. Even Benazir Bhutto, female Prime Minister of Pakistan, who claims to be all in favour of the empowerment of women, does not want this to take place at the expense of the sacredness of life and the family. In other words, no abortion and women can have as much power as their husbands agree to.

Reactionary ideas, however, are not the sole preserve of Islam. Christianity also seems determined to keep women in their place. The Pope has obviously seen the common repressive element in all religions and has formed an unofficial alliance. In June, representatives of the Vatican met with Islamic leaders to discuss the dangers facing modern society: secularism, consumerism and individualism. One would have thought that they would be attacking the money-obsessed consumer society we know as capitalism. But this was not the focus of their discussion. Instead they talked about the



decline of the family and sex. In other words, the major danger facing modern society is the attempt by women to have control over their own bodies and to free themselves from a lifetime of devotion to children and husband. This view is reinforced by the need for both religions to keep women producing the "faithful". The new catechism states that any family planning that is not abstinence is evil.

The Pope is joined in the political sphere by the far right parties in Europe. A Catholic party, L'Autre Europe (The Other Europe) in France advocates women returning to the home and forcing all children to have a Catholic education which teaches such values. The Northern League in Italy has many MPs in Parliament, including Irene Pivetti, the first female speaker of the Italian Parliament. They are busy trying to promote "pro-family" policies, using Christian beliefs as justification. (Why aren't these women staying at home, you might ask?)

These developments come on top of increased membership of reactionary evangelical churches in America which have been active for some time, claiming to have been the source of Reagan's victory and subsequent policies. Whatever they call the religion, they all have one thing in common: the determination to impose a "moral order" that they claim comes from God or Allah. However, this "moral order" is remarkably similar to the order of patriarchal class society which is based on domination, obedience and conformity and where the rich have the moral right to rule and where women stay within the prison of the family.

False consciousness

The influence of these religious movements should not be underestimated, especially when they start joining forces. As one of the evangelist leaders in America, Pat Robertson, says, "I am convinced on the political scene that if the evangelical churches, the Roman Catholic churches, the Orthodox Jewish people, all of us work together, we can elect anybody to any office, at any level".

Fundamentalist religious movements continue to grow in the Muslim world as in their Western Christian equivalent. All these right-wing religious movements contain a high proportion of women activists who give the term "false consciousness" a new meaning. These women seem determined to make all women suffer the same fate that they have chosen for themselves; spending their lives as child-bearing assembly lines.

"Family planning is forbidden unless a woman has had so many children that her health is in danger", says the wife of a Gama at al Islamiya member, the Egyptian fundamentalist group.

Resistance

Fortunately, there are signs of resistance to these reactionary, anti-women ideas. The Pope clearly did not have the support of his church members (perhaps the reason he needed to turn to the Muslims for support).

An organisation called Catholics Speak Out collected signatures from Catholics all over the world to protest the Pope's views on birth control. The Vatican was strongly criticised by American Catholics with a leading catholic theologian, Maguire, saying at the conference, "They (the Vatican) have run into a new problem in their lives — an articulate womanhood — and the women here are resisting them stoutly and strongly". The Population Institute estimates that 80% of Catholics ignore the Pope's directives on birth control.

In the Muslim world, the people themselves do not seem to agree with the fundamentalist views on birth control. Bangladesh actively promotes birth control and even in Iran, 65% of married women use contraceptives. There are also signs that Muslim women themselves are organising against those aspects of the religion that oppress women. The Muslim Sisters was founded by three women who were fed up with being harassed by the "moral guards" when they were in their hotel room making plans to set up a rural health care project. They now claim to have support from women throughout the Islamic world and amongst Muslim women in Britain.

However, this resistance is still within the context of religion and so long as the basic premise of these religions, of a "moral order" being imposed by a superior being, is still adhered to, then it will never lead to liberation.

Rejecting only what is seen as the reactionary elements of a religion is like getting out of the prison cell only to remain in the yard.

The growth of interest in religion amongst ordinary people can be seen as a desperate attempt to explain their world and give them hope in a period where nothing else appears to be delivering the goods (Capitalism, "communism", democracy, science and technology). Many are rejecting the old order, but instead of creating their own order, they attach themselves to another set of beliefs imposed from outside, that controls and dominates their lives. The only true "moral order" is one that is created by ourselves, based on equality, freedom and solidarity. This can only be done by rejecting the shackles of religion.

Free Leonard Peltier

LEONARD PELTIER, a Lakota-Chippewa Indian, has served 18 years of two life sentences, after a frame-up conviction for the shooting to death of two FBI agents.

The agents were part of a massive military-type raid on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation on June 26, 1975. That infamous attack, documented in the video, *Incident at Oglala*, was the culmination of two years of a virtual war on American Indian Movement for their defence of Indian lands and culture.

There is overwhelming evidence of an FBI cover-up and the fabrication of evidence in order to get a conviction of Peltier. He was accused of killing two FBI agents, although there is evidence the two were killed by FBI bullets. Peltier's last hearing was Nov 9, 1992 before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. At that appeal, US prosecutor admitted, "We don't know who killed the agents". The appeal was denied. Over 25 million signatures from around the world have been collected calling for a new trial. Petitions won't free Peltier. There needs to be an active movement around the world that mobilises as many people as possible to demand his release.

Haiti — The American peace-keepers strike again

THE AMERICAN ruling class pick a hopefully easy prey for military muscle flexing after their tarnished reputation from intervention in Somalia.

Yet again the hawks in the Pentagon need to throw their weight around. The economic blockade that was implemented to punish the military regime of Cedras exacerbated the situation there and forced many poor and starving Haitians to flee to the US, thereby putting pressure on the Clinton administration to intervene. Clinton needs to stop refugees seeking asylum in Florida, and, he hopes, placate the right wing. He is already forcibly sending refugees back from the Guantanamo US base in Cuba where they fled to Port-au-Prince. But the Clinton administration knows that this is not enough, and the situation in Haiti must be "stabilised" to cut off the flow of refugees. This was one of the reasons for military intervention — not some deep love of "democracy". The generals who overthrow Aristide were allowed free rein in Haiti for three years before this.

Aristide was elected on a reform programme and the USA fears that if this is implemented it will encourage the masses in Haiti to take action against the local ruling class. Aristide has to be kept under control. The CIA had characterised him as a dangerous radical, starting off a smear campaign in which he was called a "psychotic manic-depressive with homicidal and necrophilic tendencies". He is mistrusted by many of the US ruling class. The Clinton administration believes that he can be easily handled. They are prepared to put him back in power in order to keep the Haitian masses quiet. They realise there may be a danger of things getting out of control if expectations are high and the Haitian ruling class is attacked.

Opportunity

Haitian working people used the opportunity of the US invasion to rush onto the streets and attack Cedras' police and soldiers, exacting revenge and seizing weapons. At first some of these were handed over to the US marines, but now many are being kept. Aristide issued an appeal asking that both Cedras' thugs and the masses hand over their weapons to the occupying troops. He is also prepared, under US pressure, to give an amnesty to Cedras and his gang, a gang which tortured and murdered thousands.

The US faces many problems with Haiti, just as it did with Somalia. Support for intervention in Haiti has not received popular support, despite a constant barrage of propaganda on American television. The US marines have the task of both controlling the Cedras mobsters and making sure that the popular revolt does not race out of control. Behind Cedras are a tiny and very wealthy minority who live in spectacular opulence at the expense of the majority who face extreme hardship. The masses may well decide to sweep them away as well. Once again the USA may be bogged down in another country they have invaded. From Somalia to Haiti, and perhaps again soon in the Gulf, they may find that it is not such a cushy number being the world's policeman. In this power-game it will be the working class in Haiti and US soldiers who will suffer the consequences.

Organising in the workplace — beyond rank and filism

Day school jointly organised by the Anarchist Communist Federation and Subversion. 11-5pm, Sunday November 6, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn)

This day school continues the one we jointly organised with Subversion in Manchester last year. We hope to continue the interesting and stimulating discussions we had there, and talk about practical possibilities of organising. Info from London address.

Western Toxic Wastes Arrive in Russia

THOUSANDS OF TONS of hazardous wastes from Germany and France are being transported by train to the settlement of Svetlyi in the Orenburg region, according to a report from Moscow, received 15.03.94.

The wastes have been declared as raw materials for production of cobalt and nickel, though in fact they contain poisonous substances, including cadmium (8-10%), thallium (2-3%), selenium, germanium and arsenic — substances which may cause intestinal colic, acute kidney insufficiency and other potentially-fatal diseases.

According to Greenpeace Russia, five wagons loaded with Australian wastes are also being transported to Stavropol Krai.

In all, during the months following the publication of special GP report *Russia: making a Waste Colony*, there have been revealed more than 17 schemes to export Western waste to Russia.

Taking the hazardous waste of other nations has always, of course, been a source of income for poorer countries (there are many such in Africa), irresponsibly greedy governments (such as the UK), and governments which have traditionally shown a callous disregard for the well-being of the majority of their peoples (such as South Africa). Russia, with Eastern Europe — is already heavily polluted by 70 years of mismanaged industrialisation.

PEDESTRIAN PROBLEM

IN THIS ARTICLE we look at the problem of motor danger and false solutions to it. Next issue we conclude this series on traffic by looking at Green Cars, Public Transport and opposition to Motorisation.

The Road Safety Myth

Until the 1930s road safety was seen as a problem caused by motorists. Private car drivers were a minority — more mileage was covered, and more journeys made, by bike. In 1935, after agitation by cycling organisations, rail unions and the newly-formed Pedestrian Association for Road Safety, legislation such as the driving test was brought in to control the danger. Road safety ideas were brought in, centred around education, engineering and enforcement. Ever since "road safety" has been the territory of professionals such as road safety officers, road and vehicle engineers, traffic police, doctors, lawyers and the Department of Transport. The road safety lobby (RSC) has succeeded in suppressing the earlier anger and hostility against motorisation by legitimising the danger it creates. Generally people's anger following an "accident" to a pedestrian is directed on the behaviour of a deviant minority (eg speeding drivers) rather than car use in general. The lobby maintain (with the support of official figures) that accidents — injuries and deaths — have decreased and so roads are "safer". The official accident figures are too low however: accidents are under-reported (due to police and hospital methodology, for reasons of insurance claims etc). The majority of accidents (80-95%) are excluded from these statistics on the grounds that they are "damage only". Accidents have also decreased because vulnerable road users have stayed out of the way as danger has increased. Between 1955 and 1990 the chances of 10-14 year olds being killed on the roads nearly doubled; a half of male deaths for 15-19 year olds are from motor vehicles. The DoT makes the reduction of perceived risk secondary to casualty reduction in order to continue with its programme of motorisation: reducing the safety of the environment for the pedestrian. It implies that no-one is responsible, and that "unforeseen circumstances" are to blame.

Because of their pro-car bias, many "road safety" measures in fact produce the opposite effect — "Everything that supposedly produces more danger in fact produces more safety...and everything that is supposed to produce more safety produces more danger...Better roads, better sight lines, fewer bends and blind corners, less traffic; better lighting, better weather conditions...make greater danger...because every "non-restrictive" safety measure, however admirable by itself, is treated by drivers as an opportunity for more speeding, so that the net amount of danger is increased".

The RSL method is to use excessive detail; divide and rule (eg talk separately of "pedestrian safety", "cycle safety" and "the older road user" and portray an illusion of objectivity to obscure the central facts of danger on the road. Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) is an increasingly popular lobby method. The official text on CBA for road casualties is *The value of life and safety: a search for a consensus estimate*. There cannot and should not be a monetary value on life, and life and safety are not only different, but often mutually opposed. The real cost of motorisation is at least £30 billion more than motorists pay. CBA costing includes congestion, accidents, road-building and maintenance; it excludes the loss of revenue to public transport, stress, air pollution, noise, children's escort time, and space (taken up on roads, in garages etc). CBA is only used to give a pseudo-scientific gloss to Department of Transport (DoT) places. The health disbenefits of mass car use (asthma, bronchitis, cancers, coronary problems, stress, social isolation, global warming etc) probably dwarf the numbers injured and killed on roads; they are not included in RS research and discussion. The rules of the game are biased against those most affected, who are also of course the worst off. CBA considers people as consumers, individuals whose power is determined by their income, rather than as political subjects. Although speed is a major cause of accidents, and creates worse injuries and a greater likelihood of death, the DoT regards speed reduction as bad. For them it creates frustrated motorists who act "aggressively and irresponsibly". Pedestrians too:

"May take liberties with slow-moving traffic that they would not take with faster traffic. A mother who would never dream of wheeling her pushchair across an urban freeway may be tempted to do just that in a city street".

What a cheek — a pedestrian trying to cross the road!

The department's national campaign in the winter of 1989 was a typical exercise in blaming the vulnerable, those on the receiving end of "accidents", rather than those responsible. Cyclists and pedestrians not wearing reflective or fluorescent clothing were "dimwits" — equally responsible for accidents as those in charge of powerful and dangerous machinery. There is little evidence that such "aids to conspicuousness" are beneficial. Also ignored is the evidence of voluntary tests and police surveys, which show that between one and two million motorists would fail the existing eyesight test. New findings also suggest that 20% of drivers suffer from night blindness. Similarly, Texaco's "Care on the Road" campaign (1992) tried to shift responsibility for "being seen" further away from drivers onto children; and BP Oil's recent campaign to get them young was called "Living with Traffic" (sic). Yet the evidence of children's behaviour in traffic suggests that it is they who anticipate danger and behave responsibly, not the drivers.

The DoT's motor bias leads it to stand truth on its head maintaining for example that:

"Travelling by car or bus is safer than walking"

Safer for whom? In 1990, three other road users were killed in accidents involving pedestrians; 1,014 pedestrians were killed by cars. Those who are the most vulnerable to danger are the least dangerous themselves. The introduction of compulsory seat belt legislation played a central role in legitimising the road safety lobby — yet evidence suggests it led to a lower level of care by motorists and therefore more danger for the vulnerable. In the two years following compulsion, pedestrian fatalities increased 14%; cyclist fatalities by 40% and rear seat passenger facilities by 27%.

Safety: False Solutions

Segregation is one method; it aims to reduce danger to vulnerable road users by minimising the possibilities of confrontation with motorists. This means footways and pedestrianisation for walkers; bike paths and lanes for cyclists (ironically, motorways in Britain started as a means of segregating the motor danger posed by cars). Experience shows however, that the only road-user groups to gain substantially from segregation are car and lorry drivers. This is because of the motor bias of the DoT (eg although most accidents to cyclists occur at junctions, motorists turning left have priority over cyclists in bike lanes). Equally important is the power dynamic of motorisation — cars have an immense greed for space, and the threat of danger and other motor problems tend to expand to nullify all but the most radical (total) safety strategies for pedestrians and cyclists.

Most cycling and walking, especially in rural areas, has to be unsegregated. Footways need to be protected from parked or moving cars (one third of "accidents" to walkers occur on the pavement). This can only be done by continuous barriers which prevent convenient crossing for those on foot. Footway space is constantly under threat/disappearing. Subways are rightly hated for their real and perceived danger. Visibility and surveillance are usually poor, and they are often badly maintained. Their steps are a particular problem for children and their carers, the elderly and people with disabilities. Even where they are well lit and populated (eg Birmingham City Centre) they put people in an unsatisfactory subterranean environment. Foot-bridges suffer similar disadvantages with the addition of "heights". Pedestrian areas can be found in most central urban areas. They are a form of segregation for walkers. There are however, problems of access for the disabled and they can generate additional traffic in adjoining areas. These inner city areas are also atypical of most areas where people walk.

For cyclists, there is insufficient space for continuous cycle tracks or lanes. Junctions are dangerous (as noted earlier) and they have an inferior status: often blocked by cars, and badly maintained — making them worse than nothing. The post-war British new towns, such as Stevenage and Peterborough, have a segregated network of cycle and pedestrian paths. This is inappropriate to older towns and rural areas where distances are too long to walk, the environment is isolating and dangerous, and there are obstacles to public transport and other problems caused by motorisation. Even an extensive programme of cycle routes such as the GLC's proposed 1,000 mile network of the 1980's would have left 93% of London's roads without cycle routes, all with homes, shops, workplaces and other destinations on them.

Off road routes (eg Bath-Bristol pedestrian and cycle path) have been built on old railway sites, canal towpaths, bridleways and forest roads. They are very limited in availability and prone to appropriation by more space-hungry and powerful forms of transport. Cycle routes using side streets are also very limited in scope.

Traffic calming is another approach. It developed from pedestrianisation, environmental areas and the Dutch "woonervon" ("play streets" where the footway/road boundary is dissolved). Road humps, traffic islands and footway extensions are used to restrict speed; extend space for walkers/cyclists, children's play etc; and create a more human environment. Most roads are not traffic-calmed however, even where it is fashionable. Officially, 80% of urban roads could be, but only a tiny minority are likely to be treated (and the effectiveness of TC is questionable). The average cost is £40,000 per square kilometre, ie £4.8 billion, which would take 57 years to complete. Limited TC can provide car parking space and be used as a bargaining counter or palliative by the road lobby. It cannot tackle the motor danger posed by rural roads. There is also the problem that danger could increase as motorists emerge from traffic-calmed areas, relax and increase their speed.

Problem of Power

We can see that "road safety" is a road lobby smokescreen to divert people from addressing the root of the problem — power. The power dynamic of motorisation with its social effects of fear, retreat and isolation, ill-health, injury and death; the power of the road lobby (large sections of the ruling class — the state, media, road safety lobby, oil/car/construction companies etc). The road lobby causes the motorisation problem, then defines how it is discussed through the "road safety" myth — thus its "solutions" prevail: keep pedestrians and cyclists out of the way, build "safer cars" (safer for drivers, more dangerous for everyone else), and build more roads.

Cyclist Direct Action. "Critical Mass" last Friday of every month. Meet 5.45pm outside NFT, South Bank (Waterloo BR and tube) Organised by CHARM (Cyclists Have a Right to Move).

The Red Hot Anarchistic Communistic Scorcher Column

THE PIGS of V Unit (Special Police Group) have been testing out new and nasty cuffs on protesters against Faslane Peace Camp in Scotland. These are chainless, all-in-one metal cuffs which restrict movement and punish by cutting into the wrists. When asked why they were using the cuffs, one of the scum replied that "We are testing them out on you". The rest of us had better watch out — we're next.

DEPARTMENT of Transport pondscum spent £250,000 to employ private eyes to harass Twyford Down protesters. This sum could reach £350,000 by the end of the year. They signed a contract with Bray's Detective Agency in Southampton in 1992. Result: eight jail sentences and 54 summonses.

WHEN THE newly-elected Labour council in Camden came to power earlier this year they immediately set up plans to sack all council staff and re-employ them on new contracts. Already 43 caretakers have been sacked, and now over the next three years Camden plans to open up council departments to "competitive tendering". Did you really think there was any difference between Labour and Tory scum-bags? Wise up!

THE MINISTRY of Defence spent over £800 million on four diesel subs which they then promptly flogged to Pakistan for £400 million. They also managed to up the bill on Trident subs by an extra £800 million. Of course the protozoan life form Rifkind sent plenty of this business to firms like Tarmac, who finance the Conservatives heavily.

TALKING ABOUT protozoan life-forms, remember all the paeans of praise when top parasite Nixon croaked recently. A quick rehabilitation for a top crook, who bombed Cambodia to smithereens and thus helped Pol Pot come to power; who was an eager lieutenant of witch-hunter McCarthy in the 50s; who authorised burglary and bugging; who vindictively tore up a White House tennis court because Cabinet members wouldn't back him on Cambodia; who regularly came out with anti-semitic and anti-black remarks; who sent private eyes to Paris to spy on Teddy Kennedy to catch him fornicating — the list is endless. Yet you couldn't open a newspaper without reading eulogies about him. A good indicator of the morality of the low-life who rule us.

Anarchy in the UK — A look at the British Anarchist Movement

ANARCHISM HAS WEAK roots in Britain, with no strong tradition in the working class. This lack of a base within the class has made it difficult for British Anarchists to achieve their aims and also given British Anarchism its own peculiar character.

Today, most of those in Britain who would call themselves anarchists seem to base their anarchism on a tradition dating back to youthful rebellion in the '60s rather than the tradition of revolution with its roots in the first International Workers' Association of the 19th century.

A strong anti-organisational and anti-theoretical current runs through much of the anarchist movement, which severely hinders effective activity. Lack of theory and class-based analysis means all manner of liberal and leftist ideas can be found under the label of anarchism.

Pacifism is a hardy perennial liable to spring up in times of struggle. The moralistic preaching of those who believe only in non-violent action can often be heard by the careless listener. Obviously, non-violence is often a useful tactic, but it should never be allowed to become a principle. It's going to take a lot more than moral pressure to bring down the ruling class. Those who spout "fluffy" nonsense about the police being "human beings too" and believe that protesters should lie down and form a doormat in front of riot cops can only be a hindrance to the revolutionary movement.

Hobby

Conversely, militant anti-fascism also has strong anarchist support. Now, whilst beating up fascist boneheads might be a worthwhile hobby, we should never forget just how reactionary popular fronts against fascism can and have been; eg the Popular Front government in Spain destroyed the revolution there long before Franco's fascists could. None of the anti-fascist/racist groups in Britain have moved beyond this leftist ideology.

For other issues of importance to revolutionaries, such as the trade union question and the situation in Ireland, many anarchists seem unwilling to develop a revolutionary critique and are content to tail-end the Leninist left. The historical experience of the workers' councils has also passed many people by.

The phobia of organisation compounds these problems. Most British anarchists don't belong to any formal organisation, local or national. Not belonging to an anarchist organisation hampers people's theoretical development as they have no regular contact with like-minded individuals to discuss current issues with, or to learn from other comrades' past experience.

The lack of organisation also means that when struggles arise ad-hoc networks have to be set up as a reaction to local or world events. Such loose networks do serve a useful purpose but quickly fall apart as struggles end, leaving no long-term benefits. Attempts to create permanent networks of the various anarchist groups, such as the Class Struggle Anarchist Network, have so far proved unsuccessful. Few people are prepared to make supporting a loose network one of their priorities and instead people direct most of their energy elsewhere.

In terms of activity such as regularly producing papers, attending demonstrations and organising meetings, etc, it is the national organisations which are best at putting the case for anarchism, though some local groups also do very good work. At present there are two national anarchist organisations — aside from the ACF there is the anarcho-syndicalist Solidarity Federation, and there is also the Class War Federation made up of anarchists, libertarian marxists and others.

Whilst we in the ACF have major political differences with both these organisations, sectarian bickering is a luxury we cannot afford. Another group worthy of mention are the libertarian communists of Subversion. Though they reject both the Marxist and anarchist traditions they are undoubtedly revolutionaries and we continue to work closely with them.

Milieu

On the fringes of the anarchist movement is the ultra-Left "milieu" made up of people who for the most part believe in one of the variants of ultra-left marxism, ie council communism/situationism/autonomism.

Whilst these people don't suffer from the low level of theoretical development endemic in in British anarchism, they are even worse at organising for activity, preferring to remain in tiny politically-pure groups. The Brighton-based group Aufheben is attempting to create an alliance of these groups, but so far with little successs.

It seems to me that if British anarchism is to grow then anarchists need to take their task more seriously. People should get active in their local group if one exists, or, if not, try to set one up. They should actively develop their theoretical level by reading and discussing about contemporary and historical events. See what the anarchist/libertarian journals have to say on these issues and consider who they agree with most. Serious thought should also be given to joining one of the national organisations. This does not mean abandoning political freedom in favour of stale dogmatism — it's far more likely to mean abandoning idle inactivity in favour of lively ideas and action.

The Friends of Durruti

London ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves. This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the Friends of Durruti pamphlet available from ACF (London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p including postage.

BLUE CHRISTMAS

TRADITIONALLY, CHRISTMAS BEGINS in Britain in September. We know that the festive season has begun because a new round of Harvey's Bristol Cream sherry advertisements are shown on television. And this year was no exception. Close on the heels of the drinks adverts come those for toys, and when the season is in full swing, we are entertained to the strains of "We Wish You a Merry Xmas" in the promotion of Quality Street chocolates.

This is not the place, obviously, to bemoan the loss of the Christian festival. Insofar as December 25th occurs near the shortest day of the year in terms of daylight, there is plenty of cause to brighten up our lives with some winter festivities. After all, the Christians nicked it from the pagans, who made having a good time a cardinal principle of life. So why shouldn't we Anarchists who are committed to the idea of having one life (ever) have a little pleasure around that time of year too? The problem is that in capitalist Britain the campaign to promote the "feel good factor" is just part of a continual process of propaganda designed to preserve stability, and make lots of money.

Let's take the first bit first. The very certainty that Xmas comes but once a year and has done for about 2,000 years, reinforces the idea that somehow the existing order is the natural order. Church and the State unite to emphasise the unchanging nature of things and with that, the inevitability of class domination.

This is reinforced by emphasising the cosy, warm sense of well-being associated with the nuclear family. The nonsense of the Virgin Birth in which father, mother and baby are united, has been promoted by our rulers in conjunction with the Church for centuries. Though God is the "real" father, it is Joseph who completes the family unit, alongside Mary and Jesus. This message has become more urgent in recent years given the virtual collapse of the nuclear family and the rise of voluntary single motherhood.

The idea of the happy family is also pushed every year by the great mother herself, the Queen. This multi-millionaire invades our space every Christmas day, though how many people actually switch off at this point is unknown. Viewing figures are never published. Nevertheless, enough people presumably do watch this annual farce and are comforted by her talk of the great British family. Class divisions and poverty are made to disappear, if only for ten minutes.

Christmas for millions of people is in fact a complete misery. Given the massive promotion through advertisements for gifts of all sorts, the poor are forced into impossible dilemmas. Poor parents, in particular, run up crushing debts in order to try and meet some of the expectations which advertisers stir up in their children. The targeting of children in the pursuit of profit is given legitimacy by the ideological cover previously alluded to. Poor working class families spend the six months following Christmas paying off the inflated prices of presents bought from mail order catalogues. They either go short for half the year, or shift their debts to other areas such as the rent.

Christmas for elderly working class people who have been reduced to destitution, for the unemployed and homeless, is a time of great distress. Charities, collections for programmes like Blue Peter, etc, do nothing to alter this, though they make philanthropy an outlet for guilt...while someone freezes in a ditch. Have a merry Christmas.

Left: Christmas for the homeless.

Jean Vigo — Nought For Conduct!

JEAN VIGO, son of the anarchist Miguel Almereyda (editor of *Le Libertaire*), and of his companion, Emily, herself a militant, was born in poverty in 1905 in Paris. As he grew up, his playground was often the exercise yard of the prison where his father spent many sentences thanks to his revolutionary ideas.

In 1917 Almereyda, now director of the paper *Le Bonnet Rouge* which campaigned against the World War, was arrested on the orders of President Clemenceau and banged up at Fresnes prison. Several days later he was discovered strangled by a shoelace. He was 37 years old. By then he had moved away from anarchism to a belief that all the socialist groups should be united in one organisation. He had also been tainted by allegations of receiving bribes. As the writer and activist Victor Serge noted: "The graph of his destiny had started from the Paris underworld, had mounted to a climax of revolutionary pugnacity, and was now tailing off in corruption, among the money-bags".

Jean, the "son of the traitor" passed his childhood in colleges at Nimes and Millau. The memory of his father, and the long years of boarding school, developed an anger against the system and a wild imagination shot through with irony, expressions of a rage to live. It was in the cinema that he realised this imagination.

His first film of 1929 *A propos de Nice* was very much a social film, contrasting the rich parasites of the Promenade des Anglais and the poor neighbourhoods of old Nice, and with a strong anti-militarist and anti-clerical flavour. At around this time he joined the Association des Ecrivains et des Artistes Revolutionnaires (Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists). His next film *Zero de Conduite* (Nought for Conduct) gave plenty of room for his savage and anti-authoritarian sense of humour. In this portrayal of

a boarding school and the revolt of the school students with which the film ends, Vigo spares no-one — neither the school functionaries nor the officials, the parents or the children. For the first time on screen children are shown breaking all conventions. Not for them the "innocence" and "purity" of childhood, but unfettered rebellion. This film, with lyrical scenes of revolt, drew the anger of bourgeois society. The film was banned soon after it appeared in August 1933. The "Organised Fathers of The Family" started a massive campaign to ban it, and Vigo was called "anti-French".

Vigo's next film, *L'Atalante*, developed the other side of his outlook. On one hand the spirit of revolt, the lack of illusions in present society, as well as a certain pessimism, and now to be more fully exposed, Vigo's appreciation of the passing beauties of life and the fleeting joys and happiness in it. In this film, about the motley collection of people living and working on a barge on the Seine, Vigo retains his harsh portrayal of life in present-day society. People are portrayed as behaving mechanically, as in the marriage scene, and the actions of the employers. In one scene, a mob of well-fed bourgeois lynch a starving thief. Here Vigo draws on his acquaintance with the social drawings of pre-World War anarchist illustrators like Steinlen, Grandjouan and Gassier. But this mechanisation of personalities is limited to the scenes on land — the scenes representing society. On board the barge is a microcosm of purity, of happiness and of fraternity. On the barge each works for all and all work for one.

Vigo's development of an optimistic social theme and vision of a future society were to be cut short by his premature death on 5 October 1934 at the age of 29. He died of under-nourishment and overwork, which left him open to a fatal attack of septicaemia. This son of anarchists carried his parents' work on in his own way and he too was to fall victim to a cruel and repressive society.

Vigo's two main films have been recently restored to their former length and have been doing a circuit of the "art house" cinemas. They have been affected by the passage of time and sometimes viewing them is difficult — the feeling of datedness is strong. Nevertheless, it is worth seeing for the best moments. *Zero de Conduite* is being shown at the London Filmmakers Coop, 8pm Friday October 21st at 42 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 as part of the 10 Days of Anarchy event. On the bill with it is *If*, directed by the late Lindsay Anderson, and heavily influenced by it. (Interestingly, the scriptwriter of *If*, David Sherwin, admitted that his great hero was Nestor Makhno, the Ukrainian Anarchist revolutionary.)

DEAR FRIENDS,

Please find enclosed a response to one of your articles which was excellent!

I wholeheartedly agree with the views expressed in issue 34 in the article NATFHE sabotage. It is a disgrace that a trade union is seeking to collaborate in a deterioration of working practices which will lead to a decline in the real quality of further education. They are accomplices to this capitalist government. In covering up the real figures about unemployment the government is persuading young adults to go into FE. They are given fairy tale career guidance eg "take a course and then you will get a job and live happily ever after". It is not publicised that graduates have the highest rate of unemployment and it is forgotten that many young people no longer want to study. They just want a proper job. Being working class, the young adults are not likely to complain about the real quality of their courses. The reality being that class sizes are being increased — doubled where room space permits. Walls are being demolished to create larger rooms. The actual hours students are able to have contact with lecturers is being reduced. Students are given "self-directed study time", which means go to the library or go home. The real reason has nothing to do with education, it means the lecturer can teach more groups of larger sizes. If you are on a course you may get to the end of the year without the lecturer knowing your name. The government has pulled a clever three card trick: 1) Conning the youngsters that they are doing something for a career. The government hopes they won't realise that there are no jobs for them at the end of their study. It also reduces the likelihood of subversive activity to undermine the system. 2) It keeps the already-fiddled unemployment figures down and is good for propaganda, eg: "more and more young people are entering FE". 3) By cutting costs in FE redundancies and increasing staff hours, it saves money. College managements sired with the Thatcher mentality are implementing state policies whilst receiving fat salaries paid for by higher enrolment fees. They regard their staff as "the enemy" and have no regard for the students other than making sure their numbers increase. American-style semester systems, alien to Britain, are being introduced, along with meaningless mission statements and even more meaningless slogans such as "progress to succeed" or "committed to quality". They are adapting the marketing methods of double-glazing salespeople in their desperation to achieve targets. The real victims are the young people. There are no jobs at the end, grants are slashed when they are half way through the course. Most have part-time, low-paid jobs to help them through the course. Some are even encouraged to continue studying and to take further courses which lead to greater debts. The prospects for a job are no better. No doubt the state has calculated that it is cheaper to push young adults into FE than pay out social security. They see FE as a pre-dole creche, custodial training and educational conscription. Many thanks and best wishes,

G.H. (Canterbury)

DEAR ACF,

I refer to your article "The Mythology of Nationalism" in the April/June issue of *Organise!*. I found it interesting to be reminded of the various invasions of Ireland in the past, by the Firbolg, Picts, Cruthins, Celts, etc. I also agree that nationalism is pro-capitalist. However, a few points made towards the end of the article I strongly disagreed with. Firstly, despite the fact that Ireland has been invaded by many different tribes, this is completely irrelevant to the war in the six counties. All of Europe has had various tribes wandering around raping and pillaging in the distant past, but this does not mean that they have soldiers on the streets today. The one invasion that is relevant is the British invasion. That is because the British state still occupies the six counties in the north of Ireland. The six counties, like Hong Kong and the Falklands, is still a colony of Britain. It is claimed in the article that the war in the six counties is not a colonial war. It could not be anything else but that. On one side you have the nationalists fighting to end the occupation of their country by a foreign power. On the other side you have foreign rulers controlling violent oppression by an army, and an armed and politically-motivated police force operating alongside death squads who eliminate those who oppose them. What could more typically be a colonial war than that? It is extremely important for anarchists in Britain to recognise the existence of British imperialism and to fight against it. The British state is able to do things that most capitalist states would not be able to do in their wildest dreams. Club Britain is one of the most powerful states in the world. It is in the G7 and the security council of the UN. Not only does it directly occupy its own colonies, but it is able to intervene militarily along with the other imperialist powers in "independent" countries throughout the world. The British state, when helping the USA, was able to bomb Libya with impunity. It took part in the Gulf War and killed 200,000 civilians and conscripts who had already surrendered. It, with the UN security council, still operates an embargo, even denying medical aid which is killing the poor of Iraq in their thousands. It is able to send the SAS to train Pol Pot and arm him with mines in Cambodia, and supply the Indonesian state with warplanes so they could slaughter the people of East Timor. Its army operates throughout the world, suppressing whole nations of people in the name of the national interest, which means higher profits for the British ruling class. Apart from military intervention, Britain along with fellow imperialists: USA, Japan, China, Russia, France and Germany is able to exploit economically the rest of the world, using various institutions such as the World Bank and IMF and trading treaties such as GATT. The British ruling class is able to assert its own will on countries throughout the world. The media and politicians are always claiming that it is in the interests of the British working class to support global domination and the role of "world policeman". We must expose that lie. We must be clear that Britain has no right to impose its will on other countries, and that it is not in the interests of the British workers to support the oppression of other workers. As far as the six counties go, anarchists should be fighting for the uniting of Catholic and Protestant workers. We should be arguing for the end to the partition of Ireland because it divides the working class of Ireland and we should be fighting for an Anarchist Republic. But most importantly whenever Northern Ireland is brought up we should make it clear that the reason for the problems of the North is because of British Imperialism, and the only solution can start with their withdrawal.

yours for anarchism
A.B. (London N17)

EDS. REPLY: History moves very fast, and we feel the British State is ready to jettison the six counties (see our article elsewhere) rather than maintain its costly military occupation. Of course we are in favour of British military withdrawal, we always have been, but we feel that calling for an end to partition must be unambiguous. Reunification with the South, still completely incorporated within world capitalism, would not in itself be an advance. Yes, unity between Catholic and Protestant workers, a very difficult task, must be fought for, and must be on the basis of opposition to all capitalist states, even if they drape themselves in green and summon up the mystical Republic.

Red, black and blue — anarchy and sexual liberation.
2-6pm Sunday 23rd October Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Public meeting convened by Lesbian and Gay Freedom Movement.

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 3rd December features and reviews, and 10th December for letters and news.

Coming in the next issue: a debate on pornography; Cuba — last great white hope of the leftists; Labour — an analysis of the Blair-Prescott leadership and how the "revolutionary" left still support this capitalist party. All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Sell *Organise!*

ALTHOUGH OUR sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends or workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people. If you know of any bookshop or newsagent in your area which will take *Organise!*, why not make sure they get some?

Write for *Organise!*: You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Subscribe to *Organise!*: Why not take out a sub to *Organise!* Better still take out a supporters' sub. Get your friends to subscribe or treat them to a sub! Remember, in December many people buy presents. Why not give a friend or relative a sub to *Organise!*

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Anarchist Communist Federation

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. We have members and groups throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Please write to the national address if you want to be put in contact.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

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I enclose £3 for a four-issue sub, or £6 for a four-issue supporting sub). Add 25% for overseas subs or institutions. Return form to: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Press Fund

WE ARE MAINTAINING *Organise!* at 20 pages since the last issue, as decided at our last National Conference, to provide analysis of events on a more comprehensive level. But to continue this we need your help!

Conference also decided to move towards a bi-monthly appearance of *Organise!* To help all this come about we launched a Press Appeal for £2000 in the last issue. Remember, you can help *Organise!* grow in number of pages and in frequency of appearance. This is vital at a time when there is increasing interest in revolutionary anarchist ideas. Any donation, no matter how small will be gratefully received. Please send POs, IMOs, cheques, stamps etc to the London address. You can even send us a standing order to our account.

Write to the London address for more details. Thanks to all who have contributed so far. £75 London WC1; £100 East London; £80 Sheffield; £20 Northumberland; £2 Bognor Regis; £4 Chatham.

Organise! Back Issues

BACK ISSUES of *Organise!* (from issues 19-35) are still available from the London group address, as are a few copies of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 20p each plus SAE:

- Issue 25: SOLD OUT!
- Issue 26: Women and Revolution; Direct Action
- Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
- Issue 28: Recession; Detective Fiction
- Issue 29: Debate on the Unions; Italian workers organise
- Issue 30: SOLD OUT!
- Issue 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural Laws
- Issue 32: SOLD OUT (You'd have liked that one an'all)
- Issue 33: Criminal Justice; Bad Attitude; Battle of Wanstead
- Issue 34: Zapata; Artillery Mansions; Nationalism
- Issue 35: Rwanda; Italy; Carmageddon; Poetry and Revolution.

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we find lying around.

Red Rambles

— A programme of free guided walks for Greens, Socialists, Libertarians and Anarchists.
Sunday 6th November: Swithland and environs, Leicestershire. Meet 11am at Griffins Head Pub, Swithland (sw of Quorndon, exit junction 23 M1 and A6 from Loughborough).
Sunday 4th December: Blackbrook and environs, Belper. Meet 11am at Long Walls Lane on Belper to Ashbourne. *Phone 0773 827513 for info.*

IMPORTANT! Correspondence for ACF nationally should be sent to the Devon address (see Want to Join box). Correspondence for *Organise!* and for ACF (London) should continue to go to Whitechapel High Street.

Anarchist Communism

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM IS a distinct body of social and political ideas. Anarchist communism offers a radical alternative to the statist belief systems which have proved their bankruptcy in the twentieth century.

Marxism in both its Bolshevik and social-democratic varieties has proved a disastrous failure. Reformist feminism has made women bosses and prime ministers, but has left the majority of women still tied to the family and in low-paid jobs. Ideologies based upon capitalism, eg fascism and liberal democracy, were either blatantly murderous or hypocritically so. Only anarchist communism remains to be tested as a fully coherent approach to organising the world. As the second millennium draws to a close, its latter century has seen the almost-unrestrained rise of the state and with it virtually continuous warfare — plunder dressed up as the "global economy" and ecological devastation. The people of the world in the next century deserve much more than has been available to the great majority so far. The rise of capitalism, the technological state and imperialism have eliminated the human factor from social life. The individual in the advanced industrialised state has been removed from the community and isolated into concrete boxes, with television as the main link to the world outside. The poor majority in Africa, Latin America and Asia struggle to survive as their way of life is increasingly dictated by the needs of the insatiable global economy, with their own elites encouraging and benefiting from this exploitation. Racism and nationalism are if anything stronger, stirred up by various elements in the ruling class and taken up by many people in the working class as they see can see no other answer to their problems. Women are under attack world-wide with the rise of religious fundamentalism and the generalised obsession with the "decline of the family" and "moral values".

Anarchist communism is the alternative. It places the individual at the centre of its approach, for only active, thinking persons can ever be free. However, the individual does not exist separated from the rest of humanity. Capitalist exploitation whilst destroying "natural" communities has created and is creating social solidarity on the basis of class identity and reality, where people choose to identify with each other rather than being forced into a community because of tradition. The ruling classes of the world are waging a desperate class war against the numerically-vast population of workers and peasants. In the search for profits the producing classes are subject to ever-more savage assaults. But it is out of this struggle between exploiter and exploited, between the oppressors and the oppressed, that the mass of the population will achieve the realisation of human freedom. Social revolution is the only way of achieving liberation.

Anarchist communism is often attacked as being a utopian dream since it is both anti-capitalist and anti-state. The argument goes that both of these are necessary because of "human nature". Won't new forms of exploitation and new classes arise? Isn't it inevitable that some people have more power than others? Isn't the state necessary to keep order? We say a loud "no!" to these arguments.

Within the general context of a stateless and moneyless society, the new social order will operate through a building of community ties and along with them the creation of bodies which will be expressions of individual and community desires. There is no antagonism here between the individual and the collective for two reasons. Firstly, the individual belongs and survives within the context of the collective, so the workers and community councils as the new forms of administration will be an extension of the individual within society. Secondly, the workers and community councils (which need not necessarily be separate bodies) will have built into them a number of devices preventing the abuse of power. For example, they will be assemblies of the people themselves and should any form of delegation be necessary then the delegates will be directly elected, easily-removable and temporary.

Also, given the development of communications technology, mass participation, either within a popular assembly or via link-ups of local groups and individuals, will be possible. The assemblies at the local, district, regional and international levels will be able to plan for the future on the basis of input from participation at various stages of the peoples' assemblies. Given that there is no coercive state apparatus to enforce decisions made within the various popular organisations, there will be no physical imposing of undesirable options. The aim throughout will be to achieve results on the basis of consensus and compromise.

Anarchist communist society will be a moneyless society. Goods and services will be made available on the basis of needs. There is a limit to the number of fridges, carpets etc that people can consume, and given the downgrading of possessiveness, the inability to accumulate wealth through the amassing of possessions, the absence of advertising, and education for sharing, there will be a limit to the demand. One of the functions of money is to act as a "store of value". This allows individuals in capitalist societies to accumulate enormous sums, well in excess of what they can ever spend. In a moneyless society there is no means of accumulating wealth, thus creating another obstacle to the reemergence of a ruling class.

It may be objected that this basis of social organisation is fine for local village-sized populations but is unworkable on a larger scale. However, there is no reason why it could not operate on a larger scale if it is based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and federation which would still allow for freedom and solidarity. Even within capitalism, when examined, huge organisations and corporations are little more than conglomerations of small groups organised within a given managerial structure. Local, small-scale efforts are channelled in a particular direction. There is no reason why those efforts could not be channelled voluntarily for the common and individual good, with the impetus coming from below.

For an anarchist communist society to operate effectively, education in the widest sense must prioritise a socialisation process which stresses personal growth, a love of freedom together with a sense of responsibility and solidarity. Subtle Capitalist education has effectively gained an acceptance amongst most of the population of the system that exploits them through a subtle process of brainwashing and a distortion of the natural tendency towards social solidarity by stressing patriotism, nationalism and loyalty to the company. An anarchist communist approach to education would allow the natural tendencies to develop so that individuals would be able effectively to participate in the new society with confidence and responsibility.

Most other ideologies aim to dominate and control nature and indeed the last two centuries have witnessed a total transformation of the natural world as it has been twisted and distorted to fit the supposed needs of human beings. Now, nature is giving its reply, to such an extent that the very existence of humanity is threatened. Anarchist communism seeks to work in harmony with natural forces, utilising appropriate levels of technology to meet people's needs. There are enough resources on the planet to provide a living for all, without destroying the planet in the process.

Anarchist communism is the only ideology which challenges all exploitation and oppression, whether it be of workers by the bosses, women by men or the environment by human beings. It alone emphasises both freedom of the individual and solidarity within the community and struggles for a society which is free of both economic exploitation and the oppressive state. Anarchist communism alone can point the way forward to survival and well-being.

ACE: Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

NEW! *Anarchism — as we see it.* A newly-revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p and SAE.

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Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary libertarian theory and practice. 60p and SAE.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a "vanguard" party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p and SAE.

OUT NOW! A completely revised new edition of our hugely popular *Basic Bakunin.* 60p and SAE.

Also due out by the time this mag appears — *Aspects of Anarchism* — collected articles from the pages of *Organise!* on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

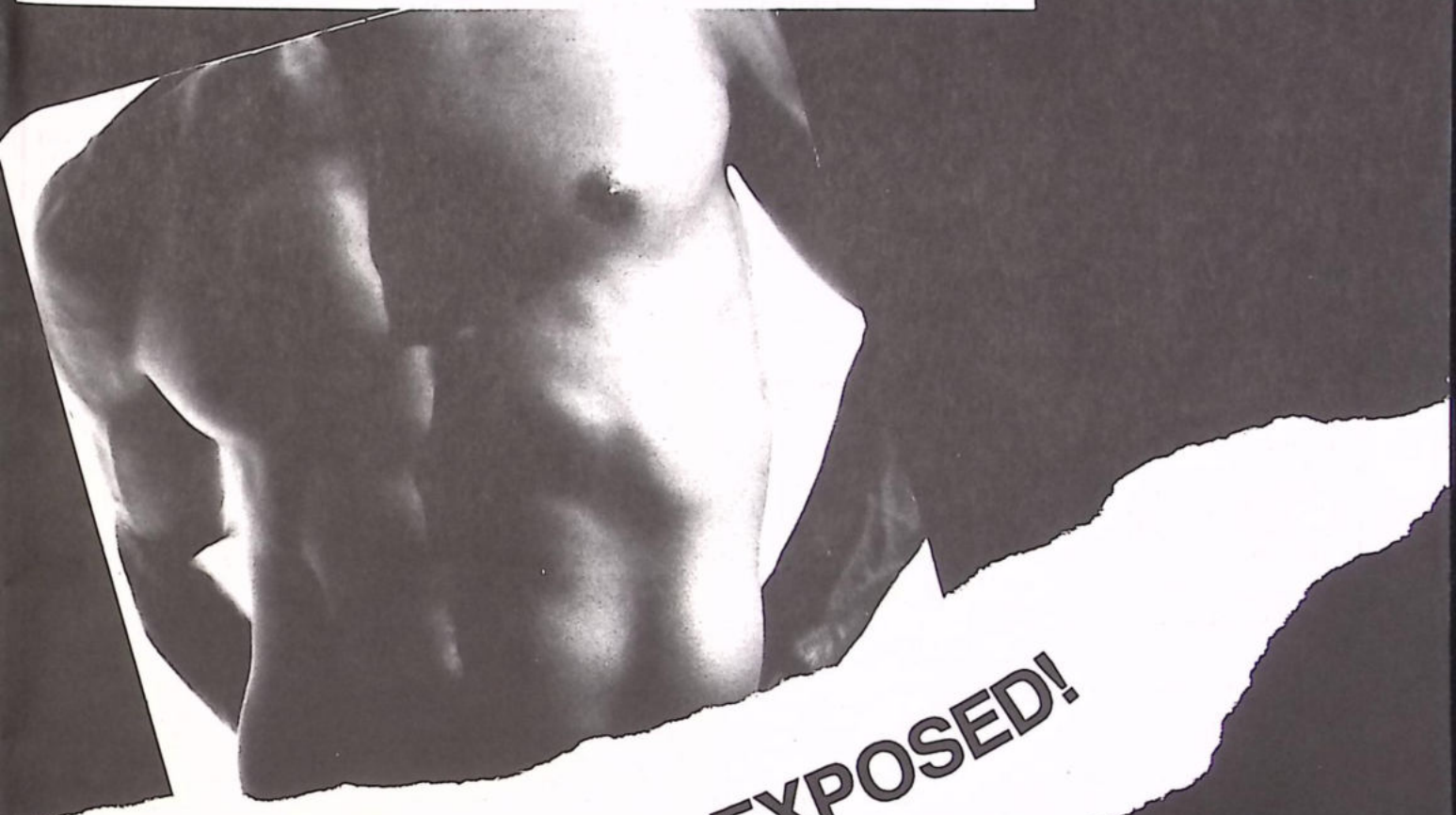
IN PREPARATION. Our long-awaited pamphlet on ecology should soon be appearing, as well as our *Manifesto for the Millennium. The Myth of Labour's Socialism* is now out of print.

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

T/SOR/16/16

60p
Jan-Mar
1995
Issue 37



PORNOGRAPHY EXPOSED!

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INSIDE

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Cigarettes, Whisky and Wild Wild Weed

You're Kidding Me! — The Latest Moral Panic

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Human Nature

And Loads More

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists.
We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc).
Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution.
In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.
We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.
We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise ourselves on a federative basis.
We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

Editorial

A new year comes and we seem no nearer to revolutionary change.

The war continues in ex-Yugoslavia, and now Russia re-asserts its dominance over the regions it controls with its attack on Chechnya. Yeltsin and his followers intend to show that no region can secede from Russia without the full military might of the regime being unleashed on them. This includes the usual horrors of massive bombardments that claim the lives of both combatants and civilians. Once again the State unleashes its terror. There is no difference between this massacre and that unleashed by the Allied Powers in the Gulf. Very little pressure is being put on the Yeltsin regime by the West in this latest bloodletting. The Western powers of the United States and, Britain and France-Germany hope to do a bit of horse-trading over the Balkans. If Russia is allowed to get away with this attack, the Western powers hope that they can persuade Russia to exert pressure on its ally Serbia to be more pliable in the carving-up of ex-Yugoslavia.

The war in Chechnya is a war between two different sets of gangsters. The Chechen Mafia are behind the regime there. One cannot forget the mass deportations to Central Asia of half a million Chechens under Stalin which ultimately was a major factor in the development of the Chechen gangs. This does not excuse the Chechen regime, which seeks to establish its own fief in opposition to the Russian State gangsters.

Yeltsin hopes by his actions to placate nationalist elements in both the military and in politics, and to keep the Russian Federation together. This attempt is doomed to failure and the break-up of the vast empire developed under the Tsars and perpetuated under the Bolsheviks looks set to be coming to an end.

Destruction

The wars continue, famine rages in the countries of Africa and Asia, and the environmental havoc leading to desertification and mass destruction of forests and pollution of the atmosphere, land and seas carries on apace. In the West, unemployment increases by leaps and bounds. Whole areas are devastated by lay-offs and redundancies, whilst public transport systems are run down. Cynicism with the whole political system increases phenomenally, along with a feeling of apathy, a feeling that nothing can change.

And yet, all around the world are small groups of people who think that things can change. Revolutionary movements can come like a thief in the night, and surprise us all. We refuse to be discouraged. We feel that social change can come, has to come, if we are to survive on this planet. We work towards the day when new movements in opposition to this decaying system emerge, as emerge they will. Already, more and more people in this country are seeing that direct action is the way forward, even though the cult of non-violence is often bound up with this. But this will be swept aside with the radicalisation of movements.

This government is almost certainly in its last days, and no future Labour administration will sabotage the growing social discontent for ever.

Labour Pains

THE TORIES HAVE LURCHED from crisis to crisis, from scandal to scandal, like an old prizefighter up against the ropes, staggering under a rain of blows. In this situation the Labour Party, under the leadership of Tony Blair, is well ahead in the opinion polls and looks set to become the next government.

The Tory administration is in tatters and many of its backers in the ruling class are looking for others to help administer the system. They know that the Tories are now deeply unpopular and that their plans to, for example, introduce VAT on fuel, would have faced fierce resistance. They are looking around for a safer bet, a party and leadership that can administer the attacks on the working class that the bosses know are necessary for their own welfare. It is still necessary to keep wages down, to dismantle large sections of the welfare state and to maintain a large pool of unemployed.

Sections of the boss class would prefer a joint Labour-Liberal Democrat government, and in fact this has been touted in the press. Even better, they would prefer a government of National Unity, where sections of the Tory wets could be drawn in.

This is why, for a while, Paddy Ashdown was receiving extensive coverage in the media and was given the big build-up. Now, however, the hopes of the Liberal Democrats are waning, as Labour under Blair is seen to be offering a much more inviting alternative.

Capitalist support

The old Labourites who defected to the SDP: Rodgers, Williams and Jenkins, are now actively supporting the option of Blair as the next Prime Minister. Behind them is the millionaire David Sainsbury, who financed the SDP split and donated £5,000 to the Blair leadership campaign. Other capitalists like Marks and Spencer are also contemplating giving financial assistance to Labour. This is coupled with the withdrawal of Tory funding by other capitalist outfits.

There are favourable noises in the media as well. The Murdoch-owned papers, especially *The Sun*, are giving hints that they will back Blair. Even the glossy magazine favoured by the upper classes, *Harpers and Queen*, noted that it was now perfectly OK to vote Labour.

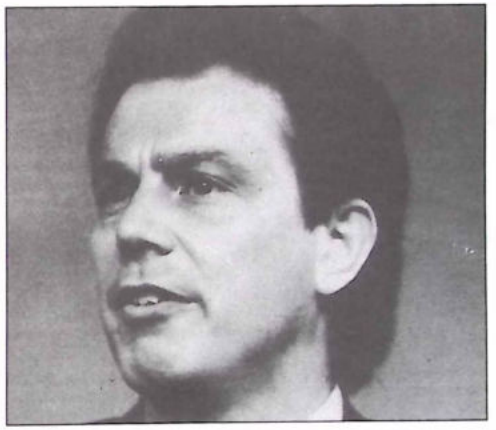
Safe horse

Yes, the boss class has nothing to fear from this public-school-educated barrister. All the signals he is giving are designed to demonstrate that he is a safe horse to back. Witness his decision to send his children to grant-assisted schools.

Blair is carrying on the work of Neil Kinnock and John Smith in transforming the Labour Party from a party that represented old-style social-democracy (and always on the right wing of world social-democracy) and a political vehicle for the trade unions, to a party more akin to the Democrats in the USA. There are many pitfalls here, as the Labour Party is still pay-rolled by the union barons, and much of the membership at branch level still believes in the old Labour beliefs and norms. This conflict is opening up rifts between the union bosses, some of whom support the ideas of the 'modernisers'.

Part of the push to change Labour is seen in Blair's seven-page pamphlet *Socialism*. He wishes to demonstrate both that he is no danger to the system and also that the concept of socialism can be seen as one based purely on ethics and that it can be re-employed as a harmless catchphrase, and keep the party faithful happy at the same time. In the pamphlet, he argues that socialism is not connected to the economy, that class is no longer useful as a term, and that any lip-service to defence of the working class should be replaced by phrases like 'national renewal' and a 'national crusade'. The word 'opportunity', one of the new ploys to market capitalism, should be substituted for 'equality'.

In his talk of 'one nation', Blair follows in the tradition of Thatcher, who tried to eradicate any notion of class, and Major, with his 'classless society'. The boss class has always been keen on hiding the truth about society, that it is divided into an exploiting and dominating class, and a class of those who are exploited and dominated. Blair is doing a good job in carrying on this tradition.



The Labour Party is also showing how safe it is by messages sent out through its Social Justice Commission. This endorsed the so-called reforms that the Conservatives were carrying through in unemployment benefit and social security payments, implying that if Labour came to power it would scrap universal child benefit. The ruling class can sleep sound, knowing that the health service that was 'opened up to the market', resulting in the growth of thousands of immensely well-paid hardmen administrators and the further run-down of services will not be changed under Labour.

On other important issues Labour is seen as keen on outdoing the Conservatives. Take the Labour stance on law and order for example. Here Labour is attempting to show that it can rule Britain more efficiently than the Conservatives, that it is the real friend of the police, that it can direct the strong state more effectively.

In a policy paper, *Getting to Grips on Youth Crime*, Blair called for custodial sentences for under-16s, and 'secure places' to lock them up. He demanded greater stop and search powers for the police, and to his satisfaction this was included by Home Secretary Michael Howard in the Criminal Justice Act. During the leadership campaign he said that there was "no bigger problem in the country than crime and lawlessness" — forgetting all about unemployment and the root cause of all social problems, capitalism itself.

Further outlining Labour policy on law and order, Blair stated in a speech that he would be "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime". This would mean more repressive police actions, what Blair calls "robust enforcement methods"; more people sent to prison for longer. He recommends greater State surveillance, especially cameras in every shopping centre.

He is an enthusiast of 'anti-truanting schemes', and training and work programmes for the young unemployed. This is a continuation of the Tory fake schemes that hide unemployment, and take people off the unemployment register to pay them a pittance.

The key note in the speech however, was the call for 'strong community policing'. This was developed by the State as an idea after the 1981 Brixton riots. It involved the pushing of neighbourhood watch schemes that would foster cooperation between the police and the 'public'. This was coupled with the use of greater force by the police. Alongside this, his trusty lieutenants Prescott and Cook make a speciality of hounding the Conservatives because they are not tough enough on prisoners and prisons are not secure enough.

Blair knows that he needs the support of the State if Labour is to come to power again. He knows that if he is elected it will be in a situation of continuing mass unemployment and increasing poverty. He will need increasing police powers as he attempts to carry on the work already put into operation by the Conservatives, the attacks on living standards, wages, and benefits against which many may decide to act.

But don't get us wrong. Blair and his cronies represent a shift in Labour policies towards US-Democrat-style politics. But the old style Labour Party was no friend of the working class. It pioneered anti-immigrant and anti-working class policies, pay freezes and austerity programmes, and under Callaghan started implementing monetarist policies before Thatcher was elected. It has consistently used the police and Army to crush strikes. It is there to defuse working class struggle.

Blair is also attempting to outdo the Tories in his attacks on single parents. He said that it was "good common sense" that children had a "stable family environment with their parents". He thus publicly slapped the faces of thousands of single parents. He pledged to make sure that children would be taught 'good parenting' in school. So the classic, heterosexual nuclear family unit is to be pushed. The Tories have already targeted single parents as one of their scapegoats. Labour looks set to continue this witchhunt.

Foot in it

Despite this, the Left continues to call for a vote for Labour. Take the Socialist Workers' Party for example. First of all it backed Prescott in the leadership contest, then decided it was Prescott who saved John Smith by supporting his plans to weaken links with the unions.

Leading SWP member Paul Foot, writing in the *New Statesman* last July said, "A powerful campaign based on restoring to the people the wealth swiped from them by the greedy minority, and taking back into public hands the decisions now made by freeloaders on the utility boards could restore to Labour the self-respect and confidence so necessary for electoral victory". Labour is unable to do this and Foot is unable to see that. Even if it were possible, it is not the place of so-called revolutionaries to advocate such a course. Foot and his fellow party members, and like-minded outfits like Militant, Socialist Organiser and countless other Trot outfits as well as the remnants of the Stalinist parties, continue to foster illusions in Labour, continue to believe that nationalisation, that is, State ownership, equals ownership by the working class. Those who work in the nationalised industries know whether or not this statement is true.

The Left, no matter how revolutionary its rhetoric, and no matter how much it denounces Labour 'betrayals' remains firmly tied to the politics of Labourism. The Socialist Workers Party could be described as the external wing of Labour, with its unswerving call for a vote for Labour, coupled with its calls to make the TUC and the union leaders fight. Despite dissatisfaction in the ranks, among those who see that a vote for Labour is ludicrous, the SWP will continue to defend Labourism.

The likelihood of grassroots Labour members breaking with Labourism because they are sickened by the turn of the Party remains very slim. They are drenched in cynicism and disillusion or have adapted to the changes. The Labour Left, still represented by people like Benn and Peter Hain, will remain in the Party and will stop any split with Labourism by continuing to foster the illusion a) that Labour genuinely represents the interests of working people despite everything and b) that the Party can be turned to 'socialist' policies. They are terrified that the attempts by the modernisers to win the next election might misfire and that they might lose the support of thousands upon thousands of working class voters.

As Hain said in the Stalinist daily, *Morning Star* (28 September 1993): "We cannot afford to have a political underclass totally alienated from the political system."

We anarchist communists for our part work towards the destruction of the Labour Party, which acts as a brake to independent working class struggle. But a turn from Labour if it took place without the development of a strong and confident mass movement in the workplaces, on the streets and estates, would be of little value. Groups like the British National Party would fill this vacuum unless there were a credible revolutionary alternative. We have the immense task of assisting in the creation of this alternative. Our numbers are small at present, but we will not be discouraged. Unflinching, dogged and tireless work is necessary in the years ahead in developing our practice and theory. We hope that you, dear reader, will come forward to help us in the fight.

We've got hold of a few copies of our out-of-print pamphlet *The Myth of Labour's Socialism*, which analyses Labourism and gives an account of Labour's anti-working class practices in office. It's 60p plus postage — but hurry, because there are only three copies!

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* you might be interested in these:

Counter Information — Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of the same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Posters and stickers

BUNDLES OF THIS poster can be obtained from the London address. Please send a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced a small concertina leaflet, explaining basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

Our last batch of 14,000 stickers has sold out, with the exception of the ecology stickers, bundles of which can be obtained from the London address, if you enclose a donation. We will be printing a new series of stickers shortly. Watch this space!

Poverty in Britain increases

RECENT REPORTS BY different groups and newspapers show a dramatic increase in poverty in Britain in the last 15 years from 1979-1994.

The poor now represent one in four of the population in Europe and 25% in the UK according to the European Commission's definition of poverty, which estimates poverty from an income after deduction of housing costs of less than half the national average. The Low Pay Unit's analysis of households below the average income for the period 1979-1991 estimates an increase from five million poor in 1979 to 13.5 million now. The gap between rich and poor has widened massively in 15 years, with the poorest tenth of the population — three million people — having a drop of 17% in their living standards. For the average pay packet this is a drop of about £30 per week in income.

Infant mortality rates also show a widening gap between rich and poor, the lowest figure being 3.9% in Northallerton District, compared to a high of 12.9% in East Birmingham. Another big indicator of poverty is the rise in TB (tuberculosis) the killer disease which had been in decline since the '50s. In the last three years cases have risen from 5,500 to 6,000. Tower Hamlets is the worst affected area in Britain, and cases there have risen by 40% in five years, with 50 in every 100,000 now infected — ten times the national average!

Tower Hamlets also has more households with more than 1.5 people per room than any other London borough. In addition, 50% of households there have an income of less than £6,500 and a third less than £4,500 per year. From a workforce of an estimated 25 million, nearly half are estimated to be in low-paid jobs.

The British ruling class has gone on the offensive against the working class since the defeats of the '70s. This has been partly achieved by changes in the tax system which have benefited the rich and taxed the poor more. Benefits have been slashed in relation to inflation.

Things are unlikely to get better with high unemployment likely to remain a permanent feature of capitalism. With real figures of at least four million unemployed, wages are kept low and the boss class has a permanent pool of labour which it can use as a threat to those in work who dare to ask for better wages and conditions.

We need to build unity between those in work and those unemployed, indeed between all sections of the working class. The attacks on living standards have to be resisted so that we can inevitably go on the offensive to smash this corrupt and rotting system and build a new society where everyone gets what they need and not just a few who satisfy their endless greed at the expense of the majority.

ACE
Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, Londn E1 7QX.

NEW! *Anarchism — As We See It.* A new, revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.

Making Progress. Out of print.

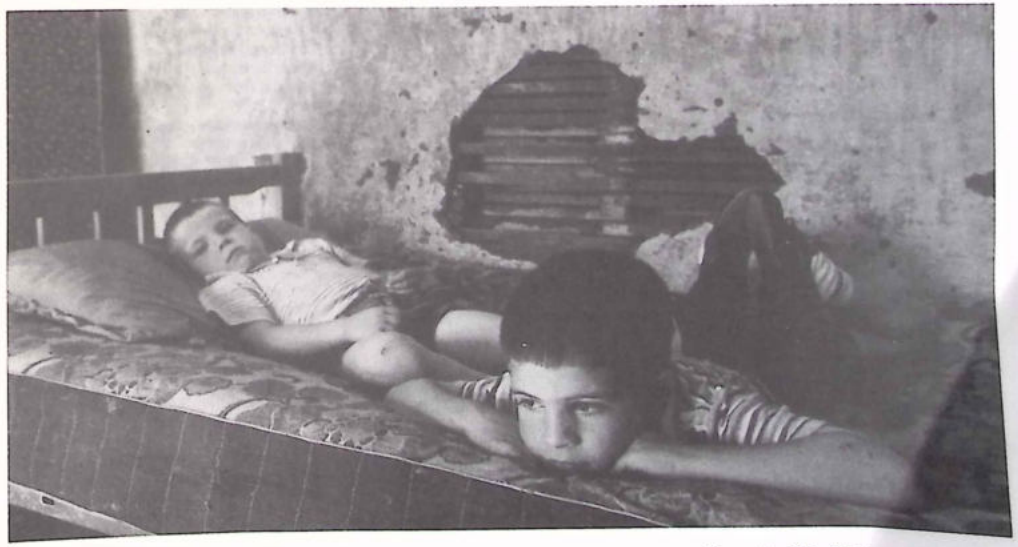
Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary libertarian theory and practice. 60p & SAE.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.

Basic Bakunin, A revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. 60p & SAE.

COMING SOON! *Manifesto for the Millenium* and a pamphlet on ecology.

The Myth of Labour's Socialism is now out of print.



STATE SURVEILLANCE

HAVE YOU EVER thought there's someone watching you. Just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean they're not out to get you. We live in a society which is increasing the ways and means it keeps tabs on us in every aspect of our lives.

The growth of information technology enables employees, schools, social security, police, local and central government and every other euphemism for the bosses to keep a vast range of 'facts' about ordinary people. 'Facts' which cannot be checked because of the obstruction of the bureaucracy which obtains them even in the unlikely event of your becoming aware of the record's existence. "Knowledge is power" the old saying goes and even Lord Acton, someone from a position of privilege in society, admitted power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The latest 'breakthrough' in this accumulation of intrusion is the surveillance camera. In recent years, the world in which we live has come under the all-seeing eye. The centres of large towns abound with strategically-placed monitors peering down on us. Shop cameras are so universal as to be passed unnoticed in an instant. Railway platforms are surveyed by the latest in high-tec. All this supposedly for the comfort and safety of the public. It is time to ask who benefits from this craze for surveillance.

Who guards the guards?

At every point we are told that the camera protects us, the ordinary citizens. The thrifty shopkeeper's livelihood is guarded against 'thieves'. The lone woman on the platform is protected from her would-be assailant. The smooth flow of traffic in cities is ensured and accidents avoided. The careless motorist is deterred from speeding.

The real question is what has caused the problems we are to be protected from and who is doing the 'protecting'. They are of course one and the same, a small minority, not of lawbreakers but lawmakers, who govern and own our society. Having cast the majority, whose work has made them rich, into the mire of daily grind or the absolute poverty of unemployment, the Real Scroungers offer false protections against the ills they have made, to increase their control over the mass of ordinary people lest they try to reclaim their own.

Voyeurs of ourselves

These points may seem trite and obvious to readers of this article but camera surveillance as a new block in the wall that separates the ruling class from its negation is another cunning step on a long road. The cops make out that they benefit the working class person if they are robbed on the street. That, of course, is not the real reason for the police force, which is to protect ruling class property and against strikes and insurrections. When there is confrontation between the police and the working class, as in riots, evictions, harassment on the street, you can see clearly who your opponent is.

The camera observes and records. It marks the next step beyond the soft cops, the social workers and Labour Party (nice Mr Blair will kiss capitalism better). It engenders passivity among those under its own gaze. Why fight back against racists and fascists on the street, they'll be captured on camera. Why stop someone being mugged, the video tape is in its heaven and like God it will bring the iniquitous to judgement in the hereafter. The camera divides us from one another. We can't fight back against State repression because we'll be captured on film. As individuals gazing into our reflections on the screen we have no response. A TV has been placed in the streets which we can watch, but we cannot change the channel let alone make the programmes.

Jeremy Beadle

The missing link is organisation. Every new technological discovery from the wheel to the internet can be used for the perpetuation and maintenance of hierarchical rule and oppression, or to facilitate a community of equals enjoying the fruits of life. It is not the thing itself we fight against, but its use. In the hands of an organised working class fighting for its liberation it will not be us powerlessly watching them watch us, but our former bosses trembling as they watch us watching them watch us make the social revolution that destroys them.

The Friends of Durruti

New pamphlet!

LONDON ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group that attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves.

This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the Friends of Durruti pamphlet are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p including postage.

A ROAD TOO FAR

We conclude our series on traffic by looking at green cars, public transport, the anti-roads movement and transport in a future society.

Green cars

THERE IS NO SUCH THING as a clean car. Vehicles based on an internal combustion engine inevitably emit pollutants. This puts the achievement of lead-free petrol in perspective, as does the length of time it took to secure such a limited, non-car-threatening objective.

Traffic fumes are a major contributor to the greenhouse gases which produce global warming. Cars and light vans produce 18% of global carbon dioxide emissions (with more produced by their manufacture), nitrous oxide (which contributes to surface and tropospheric ozone) and carbon monoxide. A proportion of nitrogen oxides turn to nitric acid and fall as acid rain. They react with other chemicals in sunlight to form petrochemical smogs containing ozone which destroys millions of dollars of crops in America and elsewhere. The nitrogen oxides in smog irritate the mucous membranes in the nose, with serious adverse effects on health, particularly for people with respiratory problems. Benzine and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are implicated in causing cancer.

Catalytic converters are supposed to reduce emissions of these dangerous pollutants. However, converters don't work when cold and therefore have no effect on the start of the journey when most pollutants are emitted. Converters are widely used in Los Angeles which is still one of the smog capitals of the world.

Similarly, there are a number of problems with alternative fuels. Liquid hydrogen needs electricity to freeze it and has storage and safety problems. Like electric vehicles it needs an expensive fuel which usually produces carbon dioxide in its generation. Alternative sources of electricity are expensive. Super 'technical fixes' such as hydrogen fuel cells and cold fusion are very expensive and distant prospects. If and when they are introduced they will displace existing car technologies to the de-developed world, as has happened with tobacco.

Even if a genuine green car is developed, it doesn't tackle the many other adverse effects of cars, such as the waste of space and resources, the danger element and the effects on street life and community.

Public transport

CARS CANNOT BE UNIVERSAL. Even putting aside the large-scale social effects of isolation, ill-health, environmental damage and injury and death, there is insufficient space for the roads and parking that widespread car ownership would entail. We already have extensive problems with cars, despite 35% of the population not even having a car for reasons of age, disability or lack of money.

The erosion of public transport in Britain (and elsewhere) is a basic consequence of mass car use. In the 1960s and 1970s, one-third of the 17,000 miles of railtrack were axed and 40% of the stations were closed. Mass car use sabotages

public transport through the allocation of funding, competition for space and loss of ideological support. The passenger revenue from buses in 1988 was £2.58 billion and that from trains was £2.19 billion. Of that, only 20% was government subsidy. Government subsidies for public transport have been cut back more and more, resulting in fewer staff and less spent on new equipment. This has serious implications for safety. For example, BR has rejected the ATP automatic signalling system that was promised after the Clapham rail disaster.

Other effects include older stock (less efficient, more dangerous), fewer routes, and higher fares. All of these factors (together with the heavy road bias of the Department of Transport) conspire to cause fewer passengers for a progressively worse service, thereby justifying further cuts in government subsidies and higher fares, causing a vicious downward spiral. Privatisation will mean more of the same. The Budget announced a £300 million pound cut in the rail subsidy for 1995 with a further £235 million cut in 1996. Hundreds of workers are losing their jobs and many more are threatened with privatisation, profitability will be the sole consideration, despite government assurances to the contrary, and up to half the rail network could disappear.

Cars compete with buses for space and slow them down. They are far more wasteful of space than buses, tubes and trains. One bus or coach carries on average the passenger equivalent of 22 cars, taking up a seventh of the space. Of people going to work in central London by road, between 50-100% more go by car than by bus: 130,000 cars rather than 3000 buses. Mass car use has impeded the possibility of an adequate public transport system. Consequently, there is a lack of imagination about what such a system could be. Ideas for improvements could include: locating more stops near homes, making the system cleaner, more regular and safer and providing greater access for people with disabilities and children.

Anti-roads movement

WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS of the current, radical movement? In the 1970s Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace International involved many green activists with their populist-activist environmentalism. By the 1980s this had degenerated into professional lobbying by the few, with most people being reduced to members/supporters who raised or gave money. This void was filled by the setting up of an Earth First! (EF!) group in Britain: a radical ecology grouping committed to direct action and grassroots organisation (see *Organise!* nos. 26 and 28 for analysis of EF! in America). Over here, internal differences over public image, the use of violence, form of organisation etc, led to the setting up of the underground Earth Liberation Front (ELF).

In Britain EF! was influenced by its American parent, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament/Greenham Common campaign and the Animal Rights movement. From these it inherited radical liberalism and militant moralism as well as the tactics of collective direct action, lobbying/publicity stunts and non-violent civil disobedience.

The movement has adopted non-violence as a principle (rather than as a tactic). The justification is that it gives a good media image, thus winning over public opinion and creating a moral stance in contrast to the materialist immorality of the roadbuilders. The media is not neutral, however, but is part of the State, largely owned by millionaire (or billionaire) capitalists such as Murdoch, the late unlamented Maxwell, Conrad Black etc. It defines the terms of political debate (eg security forces, terrorists, peace-keeping forces, deserving poor, scroungers etc) and peddles the line of the State. When it takes another line, this usually reflects divisions within the ruling class over strategy eg Murdoch's recent conversion to Blair's Labour Party after years of Labour bashing. As Aufheben point out, public opinion in this context is conceived of as homogenous and passive opposition, needing a bland, acceptable image of opposition. However, the public support for the 1984-85 miners' strike and the anti-poll tax movement, despite the negative media image which portrayed these struggles as violent, contradict this view. The logic of principled non-violence is that there is no difference between the violence of the State and the violence employed by people resisting it. This argument could also be extended to violence against property, ie it is morally wrong to cut fences or sabatoge construction equipment.

Strategy

Thankfully the anti-roads movement, particularly the M11 campaign, has not taken this line and has a fine record of sabotage. The rationale behind the movement's strategy and tactics is that their resistance is expensive to the roadbuilders and that this extra cost will create a new political climate where the Government refuses to underwrite the roadbuilders. Interestingly, the latest development (at the time of writing) is that Tarmac Construction is trying to recover the extra costs arising from the Twyford Down (M3) resistance from the Department of Transport, who in turn are suing 76 of the protesters for 31.9 million damage. This 'raise the cost' strategy failed to stop Cruise missiles at Greenham Common, but on a global level it was pivotal in the downfall of the USSR, with America using the arms race as a means of bankrupting the Soviet regime.

A further argument used against violent tactics is that they would give the police and excuse to wade in, but recent struggles (poll tax, Criminal Justice Bill etc) show that the police do not need an excuse to use violence. They are violent when they want to be. The question of whether or not to use violence should therefore not be one of principle but one of tactics. The entire State apparatus with its army, courts, prisons etc is based on violence. Capitalist exploitation is a violent attack on our freedom and well-being. It seems highly unlikely that we can overcome their power without any use of violence. However, it is equally wrong to have violence as a principle of action. As Emma Goldman said, "The more the violence, the less the revolution." Therefore, the decision of whether or not to use violence should depend on what tactics will best achieve our ends, whilst attempting to minimise violence.

Legitimacy

The other strand of principled, nonviolent, civil disobedience is accepting the legitimacy of the State. The flip-side of the 'democratic rights' of protesters that many in the anti-roads movement talk about is the 'duties' of citizens to obey the laws of the 'democratically-elected' government and to respect private property. However, we have to recognise that the government is not a government of the people and that it, and the laws it passes, represent the interests of the ruling class against us. The private property they are concerned about is the property of the ruling class. Therefore it is a mistake to speak about 'our rights' in a system that is not ours in any sense.

The future

The government plans to finance its motorway expansion programme through electronic tolling (aiming to raise £700 million). Tolls are currently charged on a third of European motorways. In August the Tory-controlled Transport Select Committee rejected the idea as illegal and liable to cause thousands of extra injuries and increased environmental damage through drivers using trunk roads more to avoid payment. Although this is a short-term defeat it foreshadows far advanced plans of the State and the electronics/motor industry. An example of this is the Prometheus project (Programme for European Traffic with Highest Efficiency and Unprecedented Safety) which involves the majority of European car manufacturers. Technology is already far developed for tolling, electronic monitoring and control of vehicle speeds as a way of reducing traffic jams, increasing traffic flows and of course increasing revenue and profits for the State and private capital.

However, depite its ambitions, the government has been forced into a number of other defeats and climbdowns through a combination of factors. The increased militancy of the anti-roads movement, the inadequacy of the public transport system, increased awareness of health problems caused by car pollution and pressure on the Department of Transport's large budget at a time of public spending cuts have all combined to make the government rethink, especially with the forthcoming general election (1996-97) and 12 Tory MPs in marginal seats facing hostility to unpopular road schemes.

Although the Twyford Dowm and M11 battles were lost, the scheme to demolish Oxleas Wood has been put on ice and six more schemes were postponed in late December 1994. This is on top of the cut of one third in the national road-building programme announced last summer. If rail privatisation goes ahead it will mean massive cuts in the rail network of up to a half, extensive redundancies (which have already started) and higher fares.

Links

This is a battle that can be won, particularly because it is unpopular and the government is in the run-up to a general election. It is vital that anti-road campaigners, transport workers and those threatened by road schemes build links. Revolutionaries should be working to build and support this process. Ultimately, a community-based, accessible and green public transport system can only be built as part of a revolutionary transformation. Its components will include popular planning involving all the communities affected, minimising the need for transport through increased local self-reliance, a service that is free and accessible to all, minimal pollution and disturbance to the environment and community and compatibility with a thriving street life of walkers and cyclists.

NOTE: We are indebted to Aufheben no. 3 for their excellent analysis of the anti-roads movement.

Aufheben (£2.00 & p+p) c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

Moral Panics and Children

MORAL PANICS ARE not new, but in 1990s Britain they seem to be continuous and all-persuasive, including single mothers, working class yob culture, crack-pushing Yardies, Aids, video nasties, flesh eating bugs and computer porn. The range of moral panics is now so wide that large numbers of people are implicated. For example, child abuse implicates the family and everything a man does can be interpreted as 'abuse'. Furthermore, there is the 'discovery' of hitherto suppressed experiences of child abuse.

Moral panics tend to happen when society has not been able to adapt to dramatic changes such as the Industrial Revolution or the modernising trends of the 1960s. The old system of values is crumbling and cannot explain new developments, so many people feel anxiety and loss of control. For the ruling class, moral panics are the result of a loss of moral authority and control, despite having played a major role in fostering them. Attempts to defend values at such times are doomed because there is no consensus. The Tories' Back to Basics failed due to lack of agreement on what 'family values' are. At present, no institution has the authority to define values and what is 'right' and 'wrong'. For example, the Church of England cannot agree on whether women and gay men can become priests. For the working class, there has been de-industrialisation, long-term unemployment, loss of homes and break-up of working class estates and neighbourhoods through yuppification. With the erosion of these communal ties, life has become far more atomised for many people. In this context, national anxieties combine with feelings of insecurity to make people susceptible to moral panics where everything can be seen as threatening and people frequently construe the worst possible outcome.

Children

There are currently a number of moral panics about children, particularly around the 'public child'. These include truancy, theft, joyriding, abduction, assault and killing other children or even adults. Underlying these moral panics is one about childhood itself, because the old definition has been dismantled by both public awareness of children's exploitation (widespread child abuse, both emotional and physical, and child poverty) on the one hand, and moves towards respecting children (Children's Act 1991, children's rights) on the other. In part the panic over childhood is a reaction against the empowering strategies of combatting child abuse, with opponents maintaining that 'parental rights' are undermined and that such strategies encourage self-centredness and fail to distinguish between the 'normal' and 'abnormal' exercise of parental authority. The crisis around children is also partly a projection of adult anxieties about capitalism in recession. Middle class bigotry also plays an important (though disguised) role: the subhuman culture of the poor is threatening to overthrow fundamental human decency (ie middle class values). Thus the end of childhood is blamed on the moral chaos of the poor and the moral irresponsibility of the mass media by such as *The Observer's* Melanie Phillips.

Childhood as we know it in Western industrialised countries is a recent social construction. In the Middle Ages, once children had reached seven they were regarded as adults, and in the Industrial Revolution child labour was widely used

in the mines and factories. Western children are kept dependent on adults for far longer than is considered necessary in other societies. This dependence has been lengthened and intensified by Conservative government policies in housing, education, health care and taxation, which increase parental responsibility and rights over their children. It is now harder for a young person to leave home and exist independently from their family. Parents' increasing control over (for instance) children's sex education is potentially in direct conflict with their protection from sexual exploitation.

Childhood

Research into media stories and adverts about child abuse show that childhood is the issue at stake.

"Kevin's 8, but for him childhood's over, Kevin's been raped."

(National Children's Home advert)

Childhood is defined not by age but by a set of qualities and experiences which are incompatible with being assaulted. It is an institution which exists independently of and sometimes in spite of children. 'Innocence' is a defining factor, an ideology used by adults to deny children knowledge and power, which increases their vulnerability to abuse. This 'innocence' or rather ignorance, is a vehicle for the adult double standard. A child is ignorant if s/he doesn't know what adults want them to know and innocent when they don't know what adults don't want them to know. In the name of innocence, adults repress children's own expressions of sexuality and deny them rights over their own bodies (eg Gillick's campaign in the 1980s to prevent young women under 16 gaining access to contraception) and try to protect them from 'corrupting' influences such as Section 28 which prohibits promoting positive images of homosexuality. The image of a child as passive victim complements that of innocent victim, both are in need of adult protection. The dominant message from the state is that all children are at risk. With the focus on children's weakness and incapacity, the call is for increasing surveillance. Parents are told to guard their children closely and not let them out alone or at night. This is the seige mentality which encourages children to live in fear. However, in any case, this approach is counterproductive because most abuse takes place within the family and increases children's isolation within the family by telling them to keep all other adults at arms length. Children brought up to fear strangers will grow up more fearful, shutting themselves in, locking themselves out of the support they need and cutting themselves off from other children. They learn to react against people who are different and withdraw into the safety of tight-knit kin groups. Brutality within the family is preferable to the risk of the unfamiliar. The growing epidemic of fear also stops adults from offering help in case others see them as child molesters. The fear of intervention is greatest across barriers of race.

When children reach an age when they are allowed out with few restrictions, a variety of factors conspire to make their behaviour 'anti-social': the poverty of town planning for their needs, lack of transport due to availability and cost, the destruction of waste ground, poor or non-existence play provision and the general exclusion of children from adult society. Due to being 'locked away', when children do break out they appear more threatening to adults as their lack of experience makes them more fearful of others, less socially adept and more at risk from the environment. Children react to such a malign environment by deliberately drawing attention to themselves: screaming, scribbling on pavements, smashing milk bottles, banging on doors and generally getting in the way of adults. Vandalism is often a response to alienating environments such as high rise blocks, areas of rough wasteland are important to children. They cater for their need to alter and interact with the environment in a setting where they have a high degree of ownership and independence. As these areas are eliminated by capitalism's insatiable drive for more profit from every source (any land not yielding profit must be waste), children's messy and disruptive play becomes anti-social because of where it has been forced to move to, eg children's excavation of a bank next to a foot-cycle path leads to bricks and rubbish on it. Children's lack of mobility (arising from car domination) means that they have smaller territories and therefore tend to become more defensive/aggressive as they become nearer home.

Early teens is the 'gang' age, when they like to hang out on the street, chatting to their friends, flirting, showing off, seeing and being seen. Hanging around inside indoor shopping centres is a favourite activity. They go for warmth in winter, to meet friends, to watch and play complicated games of hide and seek with the ever-present security guards who are there to enforce the law of consumption (if you're not shopping, get out!). Their youthful energy is a constant irritation to the air-conditioned sterility of this consumer heaven.

The current youth cultural panics are computer games (children becoming adult too young/ negative effects on play), raves and nightclubs (drugs, sex and alcohol) and pornographic/violent videos. Youth cultures are a mixture of self-expression, defiance and refusal of the dominant ruling class culture. They inevitably end up being ideologically recuperated either through trivialising them and naturalising their 'otherness' or by transforming them into meaningless exotica. After recuperation, new sets of conventions are established which create new commodities and industries, or rejuvenate old ones.

Crisis

As we have seen, a crisis in the social institution of childhood is at the root of the current moral panics around children. Fundamental to the old definition of childhood is the idea that children are either little angels or little devils. This denial of children's humanity is similar to that of other oppressed groups (eg women are either madonnas or whores). Angel and devil are two sides of the same coin. If adults insist that the proper child has no sexuality, aggression or cruelty then 'evil' is the only way way of understanding these behaviours from children, as we have seen in the case of the killers of Jamie Bulger. Furthermore, the trial judge maintained that there was a direct link between the violent video the two boys had seen (*Childsplay*) and the murder they had committed. This is despite 30 years of research showing that the link between violence and violent/pornographic material is inconclusive.

Lock them away!

The moral panic response to such anti-social behaviour (real or perceived) is renewed calls and action to 'lock them away' and demands that parents be prosecuted. (This has already happened over truancy.) There are plans to introduce child jails with spartan regimes for 12-14 year olds with a minimum of three offences. This is another return to a discredited solution which, far from curing the problem, will lead to reoffending and will be plagued by bullying and self-harm. After all, the prison was aptly described as "the university of crime" by Kropotkin. The reaction to joy riding is entirely disproportionate to the crime. Under the recently passed law of 'Aggravated Vehicle Taking' it is punishable by two years in jail or five if death is caused, yet of the 526 recorded incidents by 1993, only three resulted in loss of life. Girl gangs are also not a new or a worse problem as they existed in the 1970s. Young women offenders are dealt with more harshly by the police and courts than men because they are breaking the social taboos governing women's behaviour. Unlike the better off, many working class parents cannot afford nannies or nurseries. They (mainly women) are criticised for not being available to their children 24 hours a day. 'Helpful hints' on how to combat child abuse include the suggestion that women should not go out at all. Mothers of incest survivors are even blamed for not being there for reasons of illness/death or for abdicating childcare to their husbands. One lawyer defending an alleged child abuser maintained that the mother should take responsibility because: "This woman repeatedly went out to the grocery store leaving this child with her father."

The moral panics around the public child and childhood is a self-fulfilling prophecy. A society which represses children and fails to cater for their needs produces 'anti-social' behaviour in children, leading to calls for further repressive measures and the bolstering of the very institutions which are to blame in the first place: the nuclear family as the prime training ground for sexism and authoritarianism and the seat of most child abuse.

Conclusion

The epidemic of moral panics is a reflection of a society in crisis, with the contradiction of most people living increasingly-atomised lives in a mass society. This is the result of 20 years of recession, the defeat of many working class struggles and the consequent dismantling of much of the previous working class powerbase through de-industrialisation.

Moral panics must be opposed because they distort reality, increase atomisation and support and encourage repressive responses and false solutions. These responses and solutions are individual rather than collective and increase the powers of the state. The job of revolutionaries is to promote and support collective responses to social problems such as anti-abuse strategies that empower children, child-directed play provision, struggles against development of waste ground, new roads etc. These struggles are both an end in themselves and a means to an end — the building of power, confidence and collectivity towards the only way of achieving real community: the social revolution.

That's the Spirit?

INTOXICANTS AND STIMULANTS have been around since the birth of the human race. Whether it's tea, coffee, coca leaf, magic mushrooms, peyote cactus or yage vine, people have used different plants and distillations of plants to combat tiredness, help them work, make them jolly and convivial, combat depression, or use them as an aid to 'spiritual' experiences.

Beer and wine have been around since the dawn of civilisation. In fact, there is now speculation that the earliest towns in Mesopotamia came about precisely because people wished to cultivate grape vines, moving away from their hunting and gathering existence. Stronger alcoholic drinks probably originated early on too. But did you know that the systematic and regular production of strong booze came about at a time when the centralised State came into existence?

State revenues

In England, the first official distilling of whisky and gin took place under Henry VII (strangely enough, regular production of whisky began in Scotland at least ten years later). In Russia, vodka appeared at the same time as firearms. In all these countries there was a need to obtain State revenue quickly, and at the same time make sure that the State controlled production of strong alcohol. Spirits fitted the bill perfectly. Generally made from grain, which is a basic and most common product of agrarian societies, it was easy to transport and long-lasting. As well as raising much-needed revenue, spirits were used to control the poor and to create large numbers of permanently pissed paupers who were easily-manipulated.

In his book *History of Vodka*, William Pokhlebin talks about how the early Tsars created and controlled a lumpen proletariat "whose energies could be directed into any channel for the price of a 'bucket' of vodka" — the smallest bucket contained 12 litres! State taverns were ordered by the Tsars to serve drunks: refusal was illegal! Pokhlebin notes in his book that a drive against alcohol in the Soviet Union was necessary as vodka was ruining thousands of lives, aggravating domestic violence and leading to drunken brawling, accidents and murder. But it was a case of winning over people by argument, not by banning, which proved to be completely useless. He remarks: "The supposedly proletarian State resorted to the idealistic fantasies of the bourgeois US legislators of the 1920s."

Strong spirits have continued to be used by people to deaden the pain of life under the present system. It is hardly surprising that alcohol remains an accepted drug, whilst cannabis is still generally banned throughout the world. No comparisons are made between the numbers of people killed by alcohol through drunken driving, cirrhosis, nephritis, heart disease, strokes and cancer and the minimal bad effects cannabis has on people. Similarly, another drug, tobacco, which kills hundreds of thousands around the world every year, is condoned. Hardly surprising either that the tobacco and drink barons regularly finance or influence political parties around the world.

History of Vodka, William Pokhlebin. Verso, £17.95 (get your library to obtain it for you).

Gasping for a fag?

DESPITE THE FACT that millions in the west have given up indulging in tobacco in the last few decades, the tobacco industry still remains one of the most profitable, with sales of over $40 billion worldwide (1978 figures).

Cigarettes are cheap to make, they are habit-forming and recession-proof. Whilst sales have been affected in the west, they still make huge profits for the tobacco companies. And the tobacco companies are making up for falling sales in the west by aggressively peddling tobacco in eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, where consumption is rising by at least 3% a year. The tobacco multinationals have no intention of letting go of their vast profits, despite the vast damage that tobacco does to people's health (lung cancer and other forms of cancer, chronic bronchitis, heart failure, strokes, etc, etc).

Health

Governments are — supposedly — meant to take an active interest in the 'nation's health'. In the west, the development of ministries of health has been a common phenomenon in this century, mirrored in eastern Europe and the south. They are meant to intervene over matters of health. Yet on the subject of tobacco they have consistently hung back.

As statistical and medical evidence mounted in the '50s that tobacco was particularly harmful to health, governments signally failed to act. This was most acute in Britain, where 75% of men smoked and lung cancer began to reach epic proportions, with the highest incidence in the world.

Between 1956 and 1959 less than £5,000 was spent on anti-smoking propaganda, whilst the tobacco companies spent £27 million on advertising. Iain MacLeod, minister of health in Churchill's conservative government (1952-54) later admitted: "Smokers, mainly cigarette smokers, contribute some £1,000 million yearly to the exchequer and no one knows better than the government that they simply cannot afford to lose that much." This has remained the attitude up to the present day with Virginia Bottomley.

Pronounced

In the United States this has been even more pronounced. Early American capitalism was founded on tobacco. The American revolution, which guaranteed the independence of the American bourgeoisie from British domination, was financed by tobacco, when it was used as collateral for loans received from France. It still remains one of the most important cash crops, employing tens of thousands, mainly in the south-east.

When Kennedy came to power in 1962, the last thing he wanted to do was upset the influential southern politicians — including Lyndon Johnson, his running partner. They dominated the Congress committees, and he would have to accommodate them if he were to govern effectively. He failed to act on scientific findings about tobacco.

Despite the formation of a Presidential Commission under medical pressure, any investigations were ham-strung from the start. Dr Terry, the surgeon-general, when forming the Commission, sent a list of scientists to the tobacco industry to be vetted.

In the end, eleven scientists were selected, five of whom were smokers. Following this, one scientist from the National Cancer Institute was removed when he spoke publicly suggesting that tobacco was a health hazard.

The tobacco barons had received evidence on how harmful tobacco was from their own scientists. They hid this information, whilst developing 'low tar' cigarettes to prepare for any adverse publicity about it. They introduced filter cigarettes, although they had originally been designed to attract female smokers who were seen to want cigarettes whose ends didn't get soggy!

When a film was made for British TV about the Marlboro cigarette ads in 1976, the tobacco giant Philip Morris took an injunction out against it being shown in America. These ads had made a speciality of showing handsome, virile cowboys puffing on a Marlboro, the aim being to connect cigarette smoking in the mind of the public with good looks and 'masculinity'. The film showed that all the cowboys who had taken part in the ads had died of tobacco-related diseases, except one — who is now dead of lung cancer.

Blatant

Jesse Helms is the Republican senator for North Carolina. He now has considerable power in the Republican Party and has begun to make blatantly racist announcements about black people. He is a champion of all the fundamentalist causes — anti-abortion, anti-homosexual, pro-nuclear family, anti-drugs, anti-liberalism, anti-'communism', anti-welfare, anti-permissiveness. He was an architect of Reagan's presidential victory, mobilising all the forces of the New Right and the Moral Majority. He owes his own election as senator to his support for tobacco and tobacco's support for him, with a solid vote from the tobacco farmer. When Joe Califano, President Carter's lieutenant, began to make anti- smoking announcements on a consistent and regular basis, Helms mobilised the tobacco machine against him, forcing him to resign, getting himself re-elected and ousting the second senator for North Carolina, a Democrat. He followed this through by making sure Carter lost North Carolina and the presidency in the 1980 presidential election, helping to put Reagan and tobacco in the White House.

In 1976, Reagan had looked set to ride off into the sunset of his political career. Helms revived this, getting pledges from Reagan that he would not act against tobacco. In a letter to a big tobacco farmer who supported Helms he wrote: "I can guarantee that my own Cabinet members will be far too busy with substantive matters to waste their time proselytising against the dangers of cigarette smoking."

Tobacco is a political issue. The tobacco industry regularly exerts influence to get pro-tobacco candidates elected in the Western world (it's no suprise that Thatcher got a lucrative job after she lost her job as PM promoting the interests of a tobacco giant). It targets Africa, Asia and Latin America to export ill-health. It sponsors sports and arts, competitions and clothes bearing brand names and holidays, all with the aim of persuading people that tobacco is healthy, when the truth is that it causes horrific and immensely painful illness, accounting for hundreds of thousands of deaths every year.

The Wicked Weed?

ALONGSIDE DANGEROUS DRUGS like tobacco and alcohol, how does cannabis compare? Well, for a start, it's illegal! In Britain in 1991, 42,209 people were prosecuted for possession of cannabis, whilst in 1992 in France 30,000 were prosecuted, resulting in several thousand sent to prison and thousands of others on suspended sentences.

The State is able to use the excuse of cannabis possession as a means of control and pressure. And of course it always comes in handy when unemployment is rising and the system is crumbling to whip up yet another moral panic. In Britain, the Home Secretary Michael Howard has increased fines for possession from £500 to £2500. In France, the ministers Quiles and Broussard have just started a witch hunt against drugs. The cretin Quiles stated that "hashish or resin 40% pure are more dangerous than cocaine that has been cut". Not only is this statement ridiculous, but it proves how incompetent he is — hashish and resin are the same thing! In fact, in Britain, cannabis offences make up 90% of all drugs offences.

Research

One researcher into tobacco made the sensible statement that any organic substances administered through smoking them would be carcinogenic. This would include herbal tobacco and cannabis. Research has discovered that marijuana contains three times more tars and five times more carbon monoxide than tobacco. Tars and carbon monoxide have been shown to be major reasons — alongside nicotine itself — as to why tobacco is so dangerous to health. Marijuana can also increase the heart rate drastically, which could set off heart attacks in people with cardiac problems. Set against this is the fact that regular users usually consume much less marijuana than an average tobacco smoker, and many prefer to eat it rather than smoke it.

For a long time it has been known that marijuana actually significantly helped people suffering from some illnesses. It is used by thousands of people suffering from multiple sclerosis, glaucoma and cancer, and others with chronic pain. In 1990 an Aids sufferer in the United States was arrested for possessing two cannabis plants. Ten narcotics agents broke down the door of his trailer and held a gun to his wife's head. Subsequently he became the second person in American history to obtain the drug legally, although this right was taken away the following year.

In fact in the last century, from 1842 to 1900, cannabis was used in half of all medicine sold in the United States. The writer Robert Burton recommended it for depression in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* written in England in 1621. So why then has cannabis become such a demon drug? The fact is that cannabis is a product of the hemp plant, used not only to make rope and seed for caged birds, but also as cloth, a substitute for paper and even as an alternative to oil. It was a cartel of the paper industry, the newly-emerging synthetic fibres industry and the oil companies, that backed Harry Anslinger, chief of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in his crusade against marijuana. What had been one of the world's main agricultural crops up until the late 19th century was annihilated.

In the anti-cannabis crusade, accusations were made that it led to violence, when all findings point to it calming and pacifying. Indeed many see it as a safer and non-toxic alternative to tranquillisers. So it comes as no surprise that many of the 4,000 'Families Against Marijuana'

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PORNOGRAPHY AND THE SEX INDUSTRY

The ACF has opened up the pages of *Organise!* to the debate on the issue of pornography and the sex industry. As we have no 'line' on this issue we have included articles from different points of view. The first two anti-pornography articles were written by an ACF member and the interview with the Feminists Against Censorship could be loosely described as pro-pornography from a feminist perspective. The interview has been edited in order to keep it to a manageable length but this did not change in any way the arguments presented. We look forward to other contributions on this topic in future issues of *Organise!*

The Sex Industry

THE SEX INDUSTRY, today, is one of capitalism's major areas of economic growth. More and more people, particularly women and increasingly children, are being drawn into it as poverty bites harder. But what is the sex industry? And why is it growing?

The sex industry takes many forms — pornography, prostitution, strip joints, sex tourism and so on. Pornography is the propaganda wing of the sex industry (this is the subject of a separate article). It defines and disseminates sexual exploitation. For example, prostitutes say that punters will often bring pornographic magazines with them to show what they want to do. This is part of the sex industry's ideology that all women are essentially whores.

Often one thing leads to another. Women doing strip shows or posing for magazines may well find themselves making videos or working as prostitutes.

Throughout civilized history prostitutes have acted as a valve for releasing social pressure, and have consequently always suffered appalling abuse. More recently has seen the growth of sex tourism. As the industry has developed new perversions and greater financial rewards, so the need for more desperate people who are prepared to meet these demands has grown. So, now men buy their sex in the third world, where life is a little cheaper.

Our sexuality is deeply personal. While sexual acts with others are a basic act of communism, as we freely give ourselves in a mutual exchange of pleasure. Yet the sex industry seeks to commodify this and sell it to us, distorting and debasing it in the process. This is a fundamental attack on mutuality, turning our bodies into saleable merchandise.

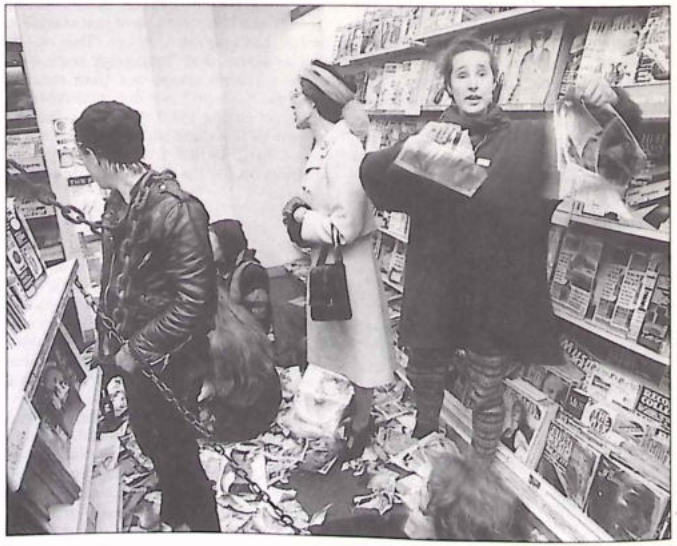
The sex industry is highly patriarchal. It promotes sex as a power relationship — the male as the fucker, the female as the fucked. Lesbians are merely 'wannabe men', providing titillation for real men. While homosexual men must play the male/female role with the he-man (the taker) and the she-man (the taken).

Obviously mutual sex by its very nature is an unsaleable commodity, so the sex industry seeks to destroy it and make sex into an act of individual pleasure through power. This manifests itself as the increasing identification of sexual freedom and pleasure with perversion and fetishisation.

While the sexual liberals extol the virtues of this supposed revolution, true sexual freedom is being curtailed all around us by 'our moral guardians' — the church and the state. Homosexuality is increasingly criminalised, any form of nudity or partial nudity is likely to get you arrested, our gender roles become ever more restrictive, and obscenity laws are used to suppress dissent.

Liberals defend the sex industry on the basis that people freely chose their own sexual preference. This is clearly rubbish. Those who buy their sex as a commodity may well be making decisions to use their economic power over others. Yet there is no such choice for the sex workers. The argument that they freely choose what they do is a lie, it is part of the myth of patriarchal relationships — that women want it, they can't get enough and that the male is merely doing them a service. Are we really supposed to believe that women (and some men) make a conscious decision that they would like to be raped by strange men for a few quid, for the foreseeable future? It is a disgraceful lie which ignores the coercion of pimps and businessmen, and the more-often-than-not drugs and alcohol dependency which sex workers developed from trying to nullify their senses.

It is a vicious circle — less sensitivity requires more drugs, which requires more money ie more prostitution, which requires more drugs and so on. It also ignores the reality of the vast numbers of women and children worldwide who are sold into sex slavery. The sex industry is not victimless. It ruins millions of lives and it destroys true sexual freedom for us all. We support the self-organisation of sex workers, both those within the industry and whose who have escaped it. We support its victims and those trying to rebuild shattered lives, and those who have fought back. We do not condemn sex workers, we condemn those who profit, exploit and rape them. We support sexual liberation and condemn sexual reaction.



Pornography, Sex and Social Control

PORNOGRAPHY IS THE propaganda wing of the sex industry. It defines the commodification of sex and promotes its saleability. It also promotes the patriarchal social relationship of male superiority over females, mainly through power and force.

Pornography's basic tenet is that 'all women are whores'. This implies that all female actions are geared towards sex and that men are the abused party as they try to fulfill the female's sexual needs. The 'logical' extension of this is that there is no such thing as rape, because when women say NO they really mean YES.

Within capitalism sex must be a saleable commodity, and as a basic human instinct it can also be used as a means of social control.

To sell sex, pornography must constantly change its product. To do this it promotes fetishisation and perversion, which have become almost endless in number. For example, French maids, stockings, high heels and so on. The objectification of women is a constant throughout all of this.

It is also racist in that it sees black/Asian/oriental women as specific fetishes. It promotes them as more primitive and sexually debased. It is also the promoter of international sex slavery and sex tourism where women and children can be bought and sold for loose change.

By commodifying sex, pornography reinforces the hierarchical power relationship between the buyer and the bought, through gender, through class and often race. This serves to reinforce the social position of individuals in society.

Social control, however, extends much further. Pornography promotes the freedom of individuals (to exploit others of 'inferior' class, gender or race), in private. By setting the agenda, pornography can control social behaviour, whilst the sex industry sells them the product. It is a powerful weapon, as isolated individuals or couples strive to be 'normal'. Without a voice of opposition, pornography passes itself off as the voice of normality. And once again we are told to lock ourselves away in our own homes, so while individuals are getting their kicks out of pornographic videos, they are failing to form relationships within their community, be they sexual or otherwise. It is obviously also much easier to buy a prostitute than form mutual relationships as we become increasingly socially inept.

This is also in keeping with the agenda of our 'moral guardians'. For example, the recent parliamentary debate on the homosexual age of consent, MPs arguing for a reduction to 16 years of age stated that what individuals do in the privacy of their own homes was their own business (the age was actually lowered from 21 to 18). Of course, as parliament has proved on numerous occasions recently, what homosexuals do in public is certainly not their own business. Once again we see liberated sexuality (in this instance homosexuality) being criminalised, while gender oppression is freely promoted by pornographers.

The pornographers' agenda has reached deep into society. In Hollywood movies women are always 'taken' by the male in the now obligatory sex scenes, which are thrown in as routine. Pop music heroes today are exclusively talentless 'pretty' boys and girls, with a pout and a panache for miming to songs of teenage sexual angst. This also provides the majority of copy for teenage magazines. Women's magazines have three subjects, sex, climbing the career ladder, more sex. Popular fiction of the Jilly Cooper type is obsessed with upper class sexual antics. Newspapers are filled from cover to cover with who's bonking who, sex ads, practically naked surgically altered women and handy hints to improve your technique. Television channels in their desperation for ratings throw in explicit sex scenes and masses of sexual discussion shows.

You may think that society is becoming more open about sex. But while we are being fed this facile nonsense, capital's continuing onslaught against us slips by without note. No questioning of genocide in East Timor, no acknowledgment of benefit cuts, or losses to worker's rights, or elderly people dying of hypothermia. In fact, nothing at all. We are fed a diet of sex and blissful ignorance.

It even serves to destroy our sexuality. What should be a voyage of discovery is for many teenagers a living nightmare. The onset of puberty is for children increasingly means a mad dash to lose their virginity, which is nothing more than a stupid, meaningless definition anyway. Allied to this are the increases in teenage pregnancies and the potential health risks (eg cervical cancer). And then having done this the sexual attitudes of society serve to make them, particularly females, feel dirty and cheap.

The sexual icons of the pornographers/mass media show us that we are not desirable. Again this is aimed primarily at women. And lo-and-behold waiting in the wings are the vivisectors (cosmetic surgeons) and the multi-billion dollar cosmetics/beauty industry to hook us to their worthless products.

But has the pornographer's agenda helped sexual liberation at all? On the contrary it has served to maintain low self esteem amongst women. It profits from women feeling worthless, inferior and inadequate. It has actively promoted the mindless macho posturing of many men, and has served to promote and maintain the patriarchal power relationship within capitalism. It promotes the marginalisation and oppression of homosexuals, bisexuals and lesbians. Our sexuality should be celebrated as an expression of ourselves in free commune with others. Pornography is an enemy of that freedom. It must be destroyed.

Interview with Avedon Carol of Feminists Against Censorship

Q: Why Feminists Against Censorship?
A: Despite the fact that feminists had been through the censorship battles against political material, against black culture, and against feminist materials and after seeing how little the state could be trusted, we had always been anti-censorship. But there was suddenly this anti-pornography movement claiming to speak for us and getting all the media attention, and everyone thought that's what feminists actually wanted. No one bothered to ask the women in this country who had been feminists since the late '60s, the Ruskin Hall conference, so those women decided to put a group together to remind people we were still here.

Q: Yes. I heard you say there that there was a problem with a legalistic approach because laws could always be used by the state or by men against feminists. What do you think of other activities there have been, such as pickets outside sex shops?
A: Well, we think it's a waste of feminist time. What's so terrible about pornography in the first place? Pornography is just pictures of people having sex. That's not where the problem is. There's sexism throughout the media. Why have they gone for pornography? Pornography's actually less violent and in many respects less sexist than a lot of other media. There are a lot of assumptions about violence and about women that never make it into pornography. Just as an example, most people, at some point in their lives, hear some man say something like, "If I find my wife's been with another guy, I'll kill her." You never see that type of ideology in pornography. Nobody does that type of thing. The idea that you'll kill a woman just because she has sex with someone else is the furthest thing from what goes on in pornography. Because in pornography sex is a good thing.

Q: So you're saying pornography is a diversion?
A: Pornography is a total distraction, it's a very dangerous distraction from real issues. We always used to talk about things like reproductive issues and how women's role as the primary caretaker distorts children's attitudes and keeps us out of the work force, keeps us pinned down, keeps us from having any economic power and keeps us making less money. And now we're not talking about the whole way the woman staying home with the kids has been institutionalised and kept women from having real power. And talking about pornography is just such a red herring. Because all pornography is about is: some people like to have sex. How does that stop women from getting into the work force and making money?

Q: I suppose the riposte to saying that pornography is a distraction, is to say that campaigning against the censorship of pornography is also a diversion.
A: No, it's not. Because unless we can address sexual issues, we cannot address feminist issues. One thing that's always been very important to the feminist movement is the fact that part of the stereotype of women is that we are sort of apart from sex, that it's something that belongs to men that men have to get from us. If we can't get rid of that, we can't get rid of a lot of the problems we have. And if you look at, for example, the studies of actual violent sex offenders, you discover that they have been people who have been taught negative images about pornography and about masturbation and sexuality which they project onto us. That is a principle source of things like rape and domestic violence. So we need to promote a much more positive view of sex and of women as real subjects in sex rather than just as objects. The moral right isn't going to let us do that. They're going to use their anti-pornography laws to stop us from doing it. So we not only don't see the point of wasting time campaigning against pornography, we consider it as giving fuel to the moral right. It's worked, too. You didn't hear much from Mary Whitehouse until the anti-porn 'feminists' came along, and then suddenly we have the Criminal Justice Bill with all that new power for the police to come into your home and take all of your media without a warrant.

Q: Presumably, they see your campaign as a threat against their power.
A: Yes. And it's very interesting that when we talk about domestic violence, the police tend to say they don't have the money and manpower to deal with this type of issue. They can't afford training people on the issue and things like that; but at the same time, we're seeing all this energy put into pornography, which for some reason they think is really important. And the Obscene Publications Squad has trebled its size and quadrupled its budget in the last few years. So they have money to launch these enormous campaigns against things they don't like. The classic example of time-wasting by the police: the West Midlands Police, who are of course famous for their popular behaviour, sent 65 cops to hang around a sauna for two years to see if any gay men were having sex there. What is this about? They're policing our sexuality, which nobody really wants, but they haven't got time to go after real crime and real violence. They have money to hang around in saunas chasing queers, to break into your house looking for lewd pictures or something. In spite of the image the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association promotes, most people do not want the cops to be wasting their time and taxes on this sort of thing.

Q: Going back to what you were saying earlier about sex-offenders, in November '92 there was a Channel 4 Dispatches Programme...
A: Ah yes, the famous Channel 4 Dispatches, the total misrepresentation of research on pornography. I really liked the part about when we ask boys where they learn their sex information, the ones who say 'pornography', believe in rape myths. They didn't tell you if the other boys had seen pornography, or whether the boys who said 'pornography' had seen anything else. They didn't tell you whether the boys were just saying the first thing that popped into their heads, or what kind of pornography they had been seeing. *Playboy*? That's probably what 12-year-old boys mean when they say 'pornography', and *Playboy* doesn't say anything about rape. *Playboy* is as opposed to rape editorially as any feminist is, so where do they get these rape myths? They didn't get it from pornography. They got it from their right-wing, conservative parents who didn't let them go to sex education classes, and who taught them that sex is dirty and women who like sex are tramps.

Q: One of the women on that programme had been shown pornography as a prelude to sexual acts and abuse.
A: Well sometimes people just talk about sexual acts, without any porn. If we're talking about sexual abuse, before there was porn men just used to force it on women and children. They would use the English language, but nobody ever tried to ban the spoken word on the grounds that it was used to coerce people into unwanted sex. A photograph of a sex act is a means of communication in those terms. You could be saying, "What do you think of this, I'd like to do it", and if your partner says, "It doesn't do anything for me, I'd rather not," that could be the end of it. What kind of a person you are determines what happens next. But, if you're the sort of person who says, "I want to do this, and you're going to have to do it," aren't you the same kind of husband who can't stand his wife talking to her friends, the kind of husband who knocks his wife around the house when she doesn't cook like Mom did and keep the house the way he likes? Abusive husbands don't stop at sex. Some of them are the other direction as far as sex: "What are you, some kind of tramp? You're always trying to have sex!" They do that too. But more women have been knocked around the house for other reasons, like not keeping house right, talking to other men.

Q: So the power relation was already wrong in that family?
A: The relationship was bad. This was a guy who was an abuser, who already has those repulsive sexist attitudes that make him think, "Oh yes, it's okay for me to treat my wife like she's an appliance who has to do things just so." And that's what we have to deal with: the attitudes that a lot of people still have about what a female partner is supposed to do in a relationship. But that of course will be dealing with sexism, which apparently the anti-pornography lot don't want to talk about any more.

Q: Catharine McKinnon has put forward the idea of using the law against material that is degrading to women or encourages attacks on them.
A: And now we're again back to arguing about the research. The research says it doesn't. But 'degrading' — this is a term that a lot of anti-pornography women use — Catherine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin use it a lot — and we're still trying to figure out what it means. As far as I can tell, where Dworkin and MacKinnon are concerned, any woman who takes off her clothes and/or has sex in front of a camera is being degraded. There are no circumstances a woman in her right mind, with free choice, would willingly do this. Therefore, it is impossible for a woman to actually consent to appear in pornography. Andrea Dworkin also believes that intercourse itself is degrading and oppressive to women. In fact it is the source and centre of all sexism. So any picture of a woman having sex is basically degrading to women. The Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship — which was founded by Catherine Itzin, who that programme was really about — they believe in something called 'erotica'. They're against pornography, but for erotica. Erotica would be pornography that didn't offend them, that isn't degrading. But again, we haven't been able to figure out what that is, that erotica stuff. They seem, when it gets down to cases, to think that all pornography, however defined, is degrading.

Q: My understanding is that the distinction is drawn around power fantasies.
A: No, because that distinction doesn't really come into play when you read what they talk about. Sucking cock is apparently always degrading. It's this kind of deconstruction that any image a man might look at and get aroused by — and of course it's always men, because women don't actually get aroused by anything — that any image that a man gets aroused by is *de facto* violent and therefore pornography. And that's an issue for us as well, because the definition of pornography in the dictionary is quite clear that it is any material that is intended to sexually arouse and anybody who goes into a porn shop knows that it is just about sex. That's what it's for. Even the stuff with a story, it's all going on in the context of the porn field, so it's not about people's other lives — it doesn't really say anything about their other lives — it's about their sex lives. But according to people like Dworkin, MacKinnon and Itzin and that crowd it's not about that. Pornography is a special word which means something else completely. It just happens to also be about sexually arousing material, but it's stuff that's degrading, violent and so on, right? But then you have to ask, well, things that are degrading, violent and somehow are bad, why single out the fact they are sexual? Why is it that we're not also going after other degrading and violent material? You can see people killed on television, and you have religious people saying horribly degrading and sexist things all the time. But you can't show people making love. That's the society we live in and that's the society that hates women.

Q: Linda Lovelace has spoken about being damaged by porn.
A: She was damaged by Chuck Traynor who was this really abusive partner she had. He was a real creep. And he did force her to do a lot of things, including act in pornography. But if you actually read her book, *Ordeal*, she talks about how being in the porn film is almost the best part of the relationship because even though he beat her up to be in it and she hadn't wanted to be in it, that was the one place she had a feeling of camaraderie with other people, because he'd allowed her to be in the company of other people, where she could talk to them from time to time. But she had to get away from this creep, and she didn't know how, because she knew she was in this part of society that people regard as scum. This woman felt she had no credibility because she's a porn star. She's nothing. She's dirt. Scum of the earth. Of course, she felt harmed and degraded. If it was considered a respectable profession, she would probably have done it without being forced. It would have just been a job. Of course there are people who are not cut out to be hookers and there are people who aren't cut out to be porn stars, but there are also people who aren't cut out to be office clerks, secretaries, factory workers, and frankly I don't know a lot of people who are inspired to go and do things like factory work. It's the kind of job you do when you can't get another job. I know women who've gone into prostitution to get out of office work. So it really depends a lot on how you perceive the job. For some women it would be a lot more degrading to have to do work in a factory than to be a porn star, which is why so many women try to be page three girls and glamour models and whatever. A lot of people make the mistake of looking at Linda Lovelace and assuming that there's a direct relationship between abusive partners and porn.

Q: I'll just end with a couple of allegations I've heard made against FAC.

A: Oh please, I love our allegations.
Q: One of which is that you're a sex industry front.
A: Ah yes, I love that one. We had a leaflet from the Cambridge Anarchists, thay call themselves. They aren't anarchists, I don't know whether they're from Cambridge. It said the porn industry is our largest media industry, bigger than the film, recording and video industries combined and it has a front organisation called Feminists Against Censorship. In fact we were THE front organisation, as I recall. Of course, none of this is true. First of all, it's a hallucination that the porn industry is bigger than all other media. This is figures from Mars. But aside from that, we're hardline feminists. When we got together we were old-fashioned women's liberationists from the late '60s and early '70s, mostly well-known feminist activists, people from Silver Moon, International Socialists, GLF, the anarcho-feminists, women who were at Ruskin Hall for the first feminist Conference in this country, the original Red Rag collective, the *Feminist Review* collective, Elizabeth Wilson and so on. These are the women who showed up and were dismissed as being in the pay of pornographers. We're not stupid. We're not people who don't know anything about feminism. We're people who in some cases risked our potential careers in order to promote feminism. And we're being told we cannot disagree with these anti-porn women unless we're in the pay of the pornographers. We can't think for ourselves. Is that patronising? Is that sexist? Yes of course it is. It's ludicrous to say that a woman would not have doubts about giving the state that kind of power to control what we can say about sex unless she was in the pay of pornographers. We didn't know any pornographers. The only reason we know any pornographers is that after we'd been around for a few years, a couple of women who worked in the porn industry heard about

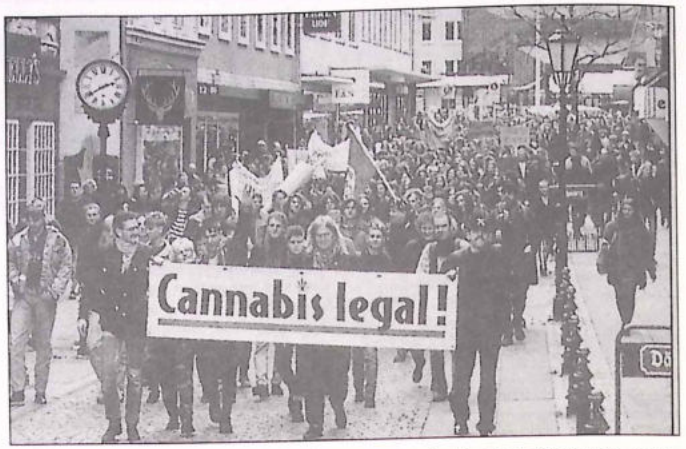
Continued overleaf

WEED cont from page 13

organisations set up in the USA are funded by the pharmaceutical companies, as well as — would you believe it? — the tobacco and alcohol industries.

It is estimated that one and a half million people use cannabis in Britain. If you add the number who occasionally use it, have used it in the past or knowingly mix with people who do, then the scale of defiance of anti-cannabis laws is spectacular. This is one reason why some police chiefs are tentatively moving towards decriminalisation. They know the law is becoming increasingly unenforceable.

So why then is it not legalised? Several reasons. First, to legalise it would mean admitting that the charges against cannabis over the last half century were a tissue of lies and scare-mongering. Secondly, despite its widespread use amongst the aristocracy and other sections of the ruling class, those who administer the system still associate its use with non-conformism and rebellion and the 'permissive' '60s. Their hatred of it is the same as their other irrational fears and prejudices, their racism, sexism and homophobia. Thirdly, as we have already pointed out, it can always be used to start another moral panic, and to mount large-scale repressive operations, whether in the impoverished inner cities of America, Britain, or France or in Latin America.



The criminalisation of cannabis is a relatively minor item on the agenda of the ruling class. If necessary, the time may come when the ruling class does indeed legalise it, and turn it into an official product that could be another source of revenue for the State. Obviously, as anarchist communists we would welcome the repeal of any repressive laws that saved many from harassment, fines and prison. But neither do we fall into the trap of thinking that smoking dope is somehow a revolutionary act, as some people believed in the '60s and '70s and some people still do.

FEMINISTS AGAINST CENSORSHIP

Continued from page 17

us and realised they'd finally ran into a feminist group that didn't treat them like scum, so they joined. But they didn't invent us, they didn't make our policy. It's nice that, unlike the rest of us, they don't have to hide their connection with FAC from their employers, but they certainly aren't getting anything from their bosses over it, either, for them or for FAC. They're just getting paid what anyone in the publishing industry is paid on any magazine. And certainly no one is giving me any money!

The other side thinks we're all collecting huge pay-cheques from *Penthouse* or something, but none of us gets paid for this. Mostly we're out-of-pocket.

AVEDON CAROL is the author of *Nudes, Prudes and Attitudes: Pornography and Censorship*, from New Clarion Press.

REVIEWS

THE BATTLE FOR HYDE PARK: RUFFIANS, RADICALS & RAVERS 1855-1994. **Published by Practical History. Donation/SAE.**

ONE LINE THE ruling class likes to put over particularly when its armed thugs get a good kicking at the hands of pissed-off proletarians, is that violence is alien to British political life. Patently, nothing could be further from the truth. State violence has, as in all capitalist societies, been a permanent feature in Britain. Likewise, working class violence has always been bubbling under the surface, threatening to expose the facade of social peace. Hyde Park, London, has often been the site of the more spectacular eruptions of working class violence. The above publication outlines some of these.

Giving a brief history of the park, the anonymous authors set the scene for absorbing and often amusing accounts of the conflicts that have taken place there. What is interesting, though not surprising, is that often the *ostensible* motivations behind the demonstrations, which in 1855, 1866-67 and 1932 were somewhat less than revolutionary, were *superseded* by events and battles which often developed a semi-insurrectionary character and consciousness. Readers will also find the press reports echo down the years and yesterday's 'ruffians' had the same role in media demonisation as today's 'hardcore of 200 trouble makers'.

Particularly interesting are the reports of the 1855 'disturbances' by one K. Marx. Nice to think that he occasionally made it out of the British Library reading room.

All in all, this publication is a welcome contribution to our 'hidden' history. Available from: *Practical History*, 121 Railton Road, London SE24.

SCOTTISH ANARCHIST

SCOTTISH ANARCHIST IS the journal of the Scottish Federation of Anarchists (**SFA**), which formed last year and involves members of the ACF. The **SFA** places itself firmly in the tradition of class struggle anarchism and *Scottish Anarchist* reflects this.

Contained within its 28 pages are articles on the ongoing struggles around the Broughton Street self-managed centre in Edinburgh, closed circuit TV/state surveillance in Glasgow and an angry look back at the Timex strike in Dundee and its sabotage by the unions. There is also interesting historical articles on anarchism in Spain and in Scotland itself. Add to this several more well-researched articles covering a wide variety of topics and you have what will hopefully serve as a useful tool for agitation and medium for the discussion of revolutionary ideas in Scotland and beyond. We wish the project well.

Single copies cost a pound but donations are obviously greatly appreciated.

A donation will also procure some of the excellent three-colour agitational stickers produced by the Glasgow Anarchists. Write to: *Scottish Anarchist*, c/o Glasgow Anarchist Group, PO Box 1008, Glasgow G42 8AA, Scotland.

Kate Sharpley Library

THE KATE SHARPLEY Library, named in honour of a first-world war anarchist and anti-war activist, has been in existence for the past eight years and now has storage space in Northamptonshire.

The library is funded by private donations and bequests from comrades and includes works in over 20 languages, covering the history of the anarchist movement over the last century. The collection is probably now the largest in England.

The library is run by a working group, which is in the process of creating a complete database of the entire collection. The group is keen to continue expanding the collection and asks that all anarchist groups and publications worldwide add the library to their mailing lists. The library is also keen for comrades to donate suitable material, and can arrange collection.

For more details, send an SAE to KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clearer anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debate on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 4th March for features and reviews, and 10th March for letters and news.

We had to hold over our article on Cuba for this issue, but rest assured, it will appear in the next one, as well as features on sport, and artists and anarchism. All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Sell *Organise!*

ALTHOUGH OUR sales are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends and workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!*: You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Subscribe to *Organise!*: Why not take out a sub to *Organise!* Better still, take out a supporters' sub. Get your friends to subscribe or treat them to a sub!

Organise! will continue to improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

PRICE RISE

YEP, *ORGANISE!* HAS increased 20% as part of an anarchist communist plot to raise the rate of inflation and bring down Civilisation As We Know It!

Seriously though folks, the price of printing, stationery, computer discs, postage etc, etc, has increased a lot over the last few years. We've kept *Organise!* at the same price for several years. Where else can you buy a magazine with so many pages and such quality writing at such a low cost that makes it a must for every revolutionary? We hope you'll continue to buy *Organise!* and help increase its circulation.

WANT TO JOIN THE ACF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation. .....

I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation .....

Name. .....

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Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
ACF, PO Box 4, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 OYZ.

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I enclose £4 for a four issue sub, or £8 for a four issue supporting sub. Add 25% for overseas subs or institutions.
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PRESS FUND

YOU'VE DONE IT! What a magnificent response from ACF members, supporters and *Organise!* readers! In issue 35 we launched a Press Appeal for £2000 to help *Organise!* grow in number of pages and in frequency of appearance. Not only did you meet the target by this issue, you've gone way above it!

Money received so far comes to £281. This month we received London WC1 £75; Northumberland £80; Liverpool £4; East London £75; Sheffield £60; Aylesbury £2; South London £115 and finally a generous benefactor in London, £2,000! That means we've received £2,692. An excellent and enthusing response.

But we can't get complacent. This is still a small sum set against the cost of getting new computer equipment for layout and to start to bring about the changes that we hope to achieve in *Organise!* Remember, no matter how small, any sum towards our Press Fund is very much appreciated, be it 10p, £5 or a million quid. Please keep the money coming in. Show us you appreciate the work we're doing and rush cheques, POs, IMOs to us as soon as possible! You can even send us a standing order to our account. All donations to London address.

Organise! Back issues

BACK ISSUES OF *Organise!* (from issues 19-35 are still available from the London address, as are a (very) few of its forerunner *Virus*. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

- Issues 25, 30, 32 and 36 are sold out.
- Issue 26: Women and Revolution; Direct Action
- Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
- Issue 28: Recession; Detective Fiction
- Issue 29: Debate on the Unions; Italian workers organise
- Issue 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural Laws
- Issue 33: Criminal Justice; Bad Attitude; Battle of Wanstead
- Issue 35: Rwanda; Italy; Carmageddon; Poetry and Revolution.

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we find lying around.

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. We have members and groups throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Please write to the national address if you want to be put in contact.

IMPORTANT! Correspondence for ACF nationally should be sent to the Devon address (See Want to Join box). Correspondence for *Organise!* and for ACF (London) should continue to go to Whitechapel High Street.

HUMAN NATURE

THE QUESTION OF human nature is a fundamental starting point of any political and social philosophy. The major historic political philosophers such as Hobbes and Rousseau had very definite views on the subject, that shaped the nature of their proposed ideal societies.

Generally speaking, political standpoints which have a 'pessimistic' view of human nature are on the right of capitalism. 'Pessimism' in this context means that human beings (or at least the masses) are seen as morally weak, corruptible, greedy and deserving of leadership. Societies, seen from this approach, should be constructed on a hierarchical basis, with the weak masses being controlled by an enlightened, or otherwise superior, élite or ruling class. Fascism and conservatism share the view that leadership, the strong state to enforce the leadership, and economic inequality, are desirable, being in accordance with the reality of human nature.

Propaganda

It must be admitted that in British society as a whole, and indeed in many others, many working people share a pessimistic approach, by and large. Decades of propaganda have been swallowed whole through the schools and the media, and the need for social inequality and the impossibility of an egalitarian society are generally accepted. Human nature, we are assured, makes a just and equal society an impossible utopian dream.

Anarchist communism as a political doctrine involves an 'optimistic' view of human nature, whilst taking a very critical (some would say cynical) view of the realities of present-day social and political organisations involved within the capitalist system. We obviously reject the pessimism of the right, which we are convinced is nothing more than a justification of exploitation of most of humankind. How can such an optimistic approach to human nature be justified on the part of anarchist communists?

Firstly, we look to anthropology to show that human societies have been and are often organised on communistic lines. Here, Harold Barclay's *People Without Government* and Pierre Clastre's *Society Against the State* contain numerous examples of peoples living without classes or the State perfectly happily. Archaeology tells us that the State and economic classes only emerged in a number of places about 5,000 years ago (Iraq, Egypt etc) and that the rest of us coped without the State for a lot longer. The reasons why the State and classes did emerge are controversial issues, but the truth is that humans lived in classless societies for tens of thousands of years. If human nature was selfish, individualistic, greedy, mean etc, such societies could never have existed, never mind surviving for millennia.

Impossible

Now, it is impossible to 'prove' the anarchist communist case that people are basically cooperative and social in their approach to life. After all, there are daily examples of individuals acting in selfish and uncaring ways. Our reply to this is that the development of hierarchy, social classes, the State and capitalism have all taken their toll and have distorted our fundamental human natures. Human beings, unlike all other living creatures, have the capacity to act consciously against their natures (deliberately abstaining from food or sex, for example) and equally are highly flexible in their response to 'abnormal' social conditions which typify everyday life. What is remarkable is that given the fundamentally anti-human nature of capitalist society, so many people still retain any sense of cooperativeness, solidarity and caring approaches to life.

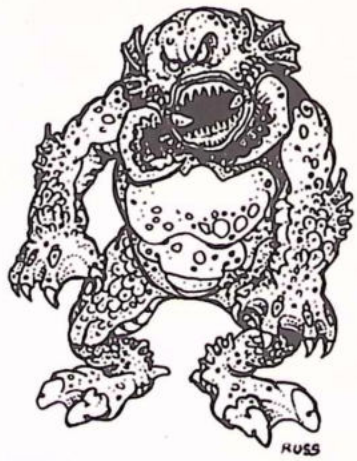
People also need security in their everyday lives within the context of community solidarity and cohesiveness. In inter-war Germany, conditions were so desperate that millions of people opted for the illusory sense of security that fascism offered, rather than bourgeois democracy (for an interesting discussion of this see Erich Fromm's *Fear of Freedom*). Today, the desperate need for security and community induces people to join all sorts of religious cults. The rise of alternative religions in the West is directly attributable to the essentially anti-human qualities of capitalism.

Along with the basic needs of community and security (both economic and psychological) humans must have a significant degree of personal autonomy, or if you like, freedom, if they are to develop according to their natures. Capitalist societies offer the illusion of freedom whilst enslaving millions in factories, shops, offices and the home. The political and legal systems fix the limits of freedom ever more narrowly, distorting and deforming in all sorts of ways the daily lives of working people. Exploitation and domination by capitalism has created an army of confused and lost people, unable to relate with others on a meaningful level.

Conformity

Children are moulded to conform to a sexual division of labour. Boys are cajoled into playing active, aggressive and masculine roles. Their sensitivities must be suppressed — "Big boys don't cry" — and they are conditioned to deny themselves. Girls in contrast are brought up to be passive and dependent, with the ultimate aim of motherhood, to achieve completeness as a person. Socialisation of this sort begins at birth. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour is not natural, but has to be learned through a long, and often painful, process. No wonder that so many people are fucked up, given that the process is imposed on all, regardless of their sensitivities.

Only anarchist communism allows f the full development of human beings. alone bases its approach upon the base of community, solidarity, personal autor omy and collective security within a non exploitative, classless society. Though human nature is necessarily very complex with the interplay of various desires and needs, only in the anarchist communist society of the future can it be revealed in all its fullness. Creativity, love, belonging and freedom are mutilated qualities in today's world. In the society of the future, they will be set free.



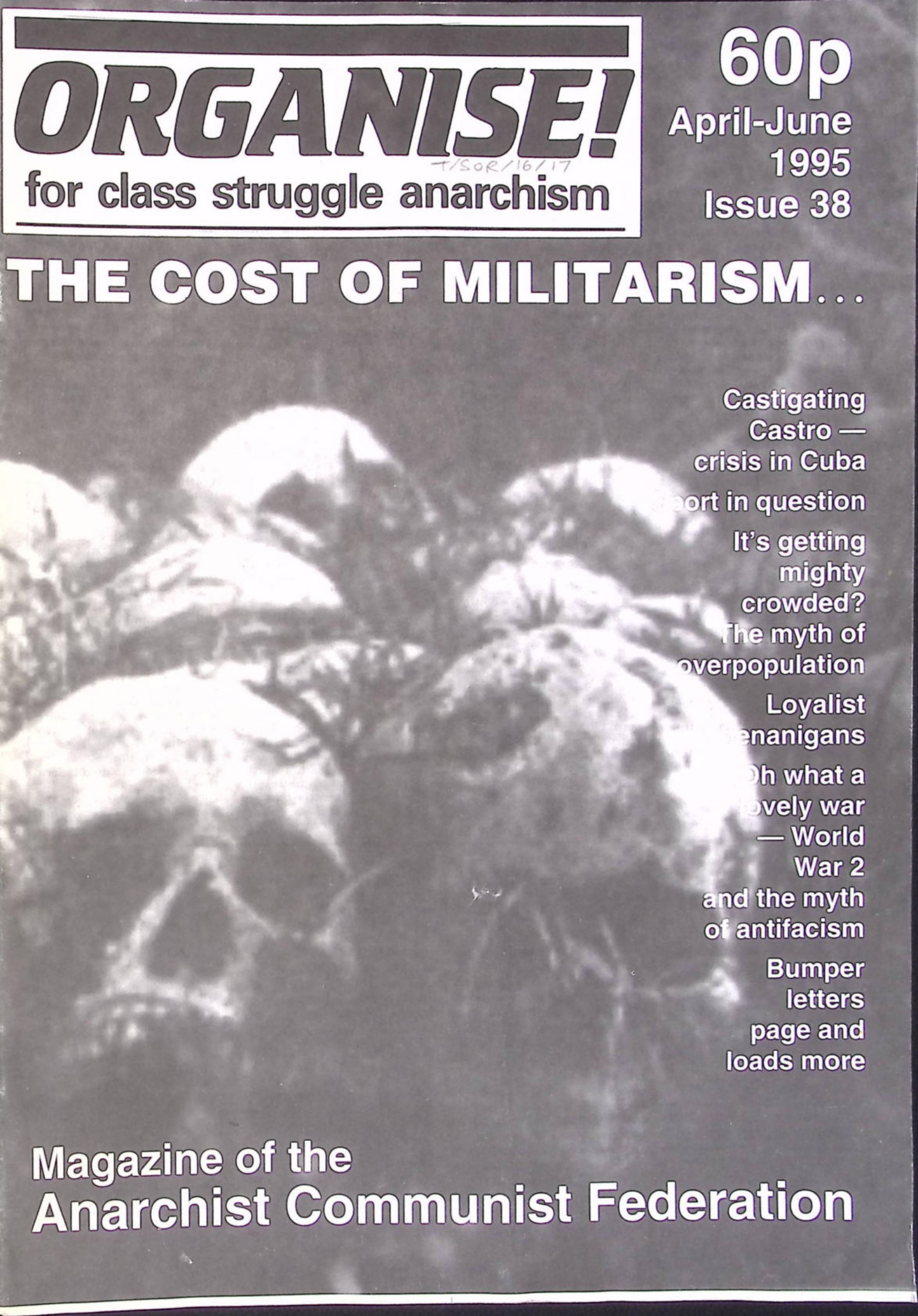
ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

T/S.OR/16/17

60p
April-June
1995
Issue 38

THE COST OF MILITARISM...



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Bumper letters page and loads more

Magazine of the
Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists.
We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc).
Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery.
Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may streng-then us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.
8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class.
However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise ourselves on a federative basis.
We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

What Gives with the ACF

ACF COMRADES IN Northern Ireland have produced and distributed their free newsheet *Resistance*. No 1 has appeared, and No 2 will shortly be out. You can obtain copies by writing c/o the London ACF address.

London ACF have also produced a free newsheet *London Resistance*. No 1 is presently available. Write to London address for free copy, enclosing cost of postage or SAE.

Active Resistance, the youth magazine of the ACF will be shortly appearing. Watch out in the bookshops and in the next *Organise!* for details.

An ACF group is presently forming in the Barking/Dagenham/Romford area. If you are interested in participating in activities in the area, write c/o the London address.

A new ACF group has also just formed in the Liverpool area. Contact via the national ACF address.

The ACF should shortly be producing a magazine concerned with all aspects of culture, art, film, literature, sport and music. This should be available by Autumn. Watch out in the pages of *Organise!* for details.

And finally, news from New Zealand. A new magazine *Libertarian Communism*, with politics very close to those of the ACF, will be appearing shortly.

Watch this space for details.

London ACF Open Discussion Meetings

First Thursday of every month, 8pm at Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, London WC1. Nearest tube, Russell Square.

May 4th: Animal Riots
June 1st: Pornography exposed
July 6th: Labour Party 'Socialism'

Also

ACF MAYDAY PUBLIC MEETING
Monday May 1st at 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Nearest tube Holborn.

An upsurge in struggle?

Postal workers

SOME 650 POSTAL WORKERS walked out of the sorting office in St Pancras Way, North London in January after a driver was suspended for refusing to drive a van he regarded as unsafe.

Senior Post Office bosses immediately gained an injunction from the High Court which ruled the strike illegal because no ballot had taken place. The same day the bosses backed down and offered to reinstate the driver. The following day a mass meeting of posties rejected the offer, defied the court order and the postal union, the Union of Communications Workers and refused to return to work. They stayed out for three days.

Wildcat action

On 19th January, 150 postal workers were suspended as a result of this. Wildcat action, outside and against union control, broke out involving 15,000 workers in North West and West London.

The action might have escalated to encompass the whole of Britain, when two postal workers in Glasgow were disciplined for refusing to implement new working practices. Terrified management quickly dropped charges against the Scots.

The UCW, of course, steamed in to sabotage the struggle. The national UCW leadership were terrified that they would be fined if the court order was flouted, in the initial action.

They again intervened to head off the 15,000 strong action. They made a deal that the strikers would have the suspensions dropped, and agreed with management that the speed-up practices, involving a computer-operated system known as CADRE should continue. They had already agreed its implementation in the first place. This did not stop the UCW getting a fine of £7,500 plus £100,000 legal costs for failing to control the workers. They know they must do better next time.

Discontent is simmering among postal workers, however, and even the most desperate measures of the UCW may not be able to head further action off.

The continuing defiance of the union by workers is highly encouraging and should be an example to those in other industries.

Postal workers picket St Pancras Depot.

Health workers

The derisory one per cent pay offer to health workers has caused widespread outrage. Coupled with this is the attempt to split health workers by local bargaining, where a possible two per cent extra is offered.

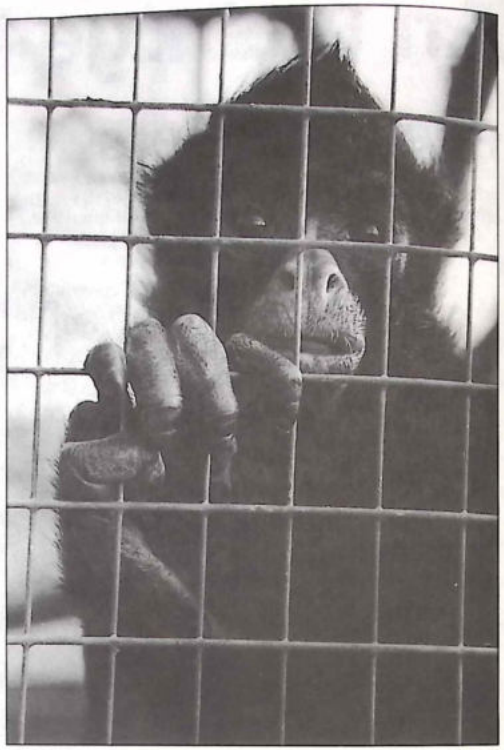
Above: Golden Virginia...

Part of the ludicrous pay rise will be withheld if too many, whatever that is, days are taken off sick. This sickness quota together with productivity targets is being forced on workers by local trusts. The South Devon NHS trust in Torquay has sacked workers who failed to give 'convincing' reasons for being off sick. Days off sick are a natural consequence of heavy workloads and stress suffered by health workers, as well as a healthy desire to avoid wage slavery! These vicious attacks coincide with the trusts paying managers bonuses of up to £10,000 a year. These were worth 6.2% to chief executives, 7.2% to directors and 5.8% to other managers.

The local bargaining is part of a national plan by the boss class to divide workforces. But the anger among health workers is growing by the day. This simmering discontent forced even the pathetic Royal College of Nursing and Royal College of Midwives to drop their no strike clauses. This is just window-dressing however. Both the RCN and RCM will continue to peddle the myth of 'professionalism' and to sabotage action, along with the more militant-sounding UNISON. This myth has a grip on many nurses and midwives, and is something that will have to be broken with if any effective action is to take place. Arrogance and condescension to ancillary workers by nurses will also have to be cast aside. Any future action for health workers must involve the development of mass meetings and action committeees that break with unions and unite all health workers.

Action in other workplaces is also developing, in particular amongst teachers and further education teachers. The strike at Southwark is an example of this. The possibilities of a winter, if not an autumn of discontent are stronger now than they have been for a long time. Revolutionaries must make sure that they support and attempt to radicalise these struggles.

Animal riots



MASS DIRECT ACTION that had widespread effects? We can't be far from a revolutionary situation, then, can we? Not if the issue itself is the transportation of calves to be slaughtered for veal on the continent.

From the start of the protests against transportation, much of the establishment press, including that which openly backs the Conservatives, initially took a sympathetic view. This was hardly because they thought that the politics of some of those involved met with their approval, but because here was another stick with which to beat the pro-Europeans inside and outside the Conservative Party. Another barbaric practice to be added to the record of those foreigners across the Channel, who weren't like us. Never mind the horrific animal experiments and factory farming carrying on as normal in Britain, here was a good opportunity for a bit of Euro-mugging. Witness the involvement of figures like Teddy Taylor and Alan Clark, who situate themselves on the Tory right.

Jill Phipps, who described herself as an anarchist, would have had no time for these scum (just as she would have had no time for the religious ceremony put on at Coventry Cathedral after her death).

Calf love

Many of those involved in the actions were genuinely sickened by the treatment of animals.

At Brightlingsea, practically the whole community mobilised against the transportations. Similarly in Shoreham 80 local people were arrested. What was important about these actions was the way the nature of the police was revealed for the first time to many hundreds. Tooled up in riot gear, the cops went in heavily in many instances against the demonstrators and hundreds of injuries were suffered.

But where is the same action protesting against the thousands of homeless sleeping rough? Against the continued arms trade? Against the hospital closures and mass redundancies?

The actions developed into a dangerous cross-class mobilisation with the Conservative right moving in to exploit the situation.

Barbarism

Of course the transportation of calves is barbaric. So is the factory farming of cattle and poultry carried out in Britain. So are the experiments in which 3.5 million animals are killed every year in Britain carried out by the drugs and cosmetics industries. A leading drug company Giba Geigy admitted that 95% of substances passed safe by animal experimenting are immediately rejected by humans.

But the reason these things happen is because of PROFIT. It's big money for the drugs companies, for the factory farmers, for the meat industry. The symptoms of a sick society, like homelessness, unemployment, alienation and boredom, wage slavery and war, will only disappear when that sick society is put out of its misery. That means not just taking a stand against the exploitation of animals, but against the exploitation of working class people and the destruction of the planet.

Not so jolly?

CHRISTOPHER BARRETT-JOLLEY owns Phoenix Aviation which transports calves from Coventry Airport (it was protests against this which involved the death of Jill Phipps) and is no newcomer to making a quick buck out of death and misery.

Arms and drugs

In 1993 one of his pilots was busted for smuggling large amounts of cocaine and heroin into Britain. Barrett-Jolley has extensive interests in West Africa, where the drugs are believed to have originated, not least through his arms dealing.

In June 1994 he piloted at least five flights to South Yemen to supply South Yemeni forces with arms. These included bombs, mortars and Kalashnikov rifles.

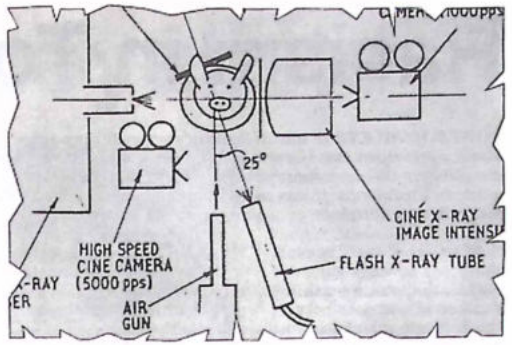
The following month he supplied UNITA forces in Angola with at least one 44-ton shipment. It is believed he made many further shipments to keep both sides in the civil war supplied with arms.

In November he attacked a 67-year-old woman protestor with a crowbar, beating her with it and smashing the windscreen of her car. He was involved in further violent incidents, driving vehicles at protestors — one of whom is still receiving hospital treatment.

'Honest' victim?

Funny then, that few charges have actually been brought against him by the police. Funny that Coventry police brought out 100 cops against just 33 protestors. Funny how he masquerades as an 'honest' (is there such a thing?) businessman victimised by extremist thugs, and how the press had a field day when a group of people angered by Jill Phipps' death, turned up at his HQ to smash a few windows. But then these are violent, rent-a-mob yobbos, whilst Barrett-Jolley only deals in death. Money doesn't talk, it swears.

Militarism and animals



AS WELL as killing and maiming millions of people, militarism has had disastrous effects on the environment.

Animals, both wild and domesticated, have also been victims of the military machine, through bombings, famines induced by blockades and destruction of forests and harvests. Animals have also been pressed into service in the armed forces and suffered accordingly. But a less well-known use of animals is in military 'research'.

Military scientists in the USA experimented with dolphins to carry explosive charges to use against enemy ships and submarines. These mammals would, of course, also have been blown to smithereens in the process. Countless other laboratory animals have died excruciating deaths as flamethrowers, germ, biological and chemical weapons have been tested out on them.

The latest sick use of animals by the military concerns the use of pigs at the secret biological and chemical research centre at Porton Down. Pigs under anaesthetics had silver balls sown on to the surface of their hearts and were then suspended above guns, which were then fired to test internal injuries. The pigs are only 600-750mm away from the mouth of the guns when they are fired. This, apparently, is to research 'protective clothing'.

The Ministry of Defence has increased animal experiments by 51% at a time when a general fall in animal experiments by 10% in Britain has been brought about by campaigns, including the use of direct action. Most of the animals die under anaesthetic, but some of the pigs are kept alive to "see how their wounds develop"!

Capitalism brutalises humans, destroys the environment, and turns animals into just so many products for profit and experiment. Time to dismantle it, and with it disband the armies!

Fight the Criminal Justice Act

THE POLICE ARE NOW using the Criminal Justice Act on a widespread basis against hunt saboteurs and demonstrations and mass trespasses against the Act itself.

The Act has been in operation for five months at time of writing, and already 100 have been arrested under its provisions. Mass trespasses took place in Edinburgh near Defence Secretary Rifkind's mansion, and at Windsor Castle, where 20 arrests took place. Opposition to the Act will continue, especially when the cops use the CJA against free festivals planned for the summer.

The arrests of seven — the Hackney 7 — at Hackney Town Hall in a demo against the CJA last July resulted in fines of up to £3,300 fines. These heavy fines were clearly political. With most of the defendants being acquitted, and discrediting the police in the process, the Crown Prosecution Service was looking for revenge.

Hackney Labour Council took out injunctions against the defendants which banned them from council property. This included the use of public toilets or housing benefit offices without written permission. When these injunctions were challenged, the Labour Council backed down.

Any donations to the fines will be gratefully accepted. Send to Hackney 7 Defence Campaign, c/o Hackney Community Defence Association, Colin Roach Centre, 10a Bradbury St, London N16.

The weekly *SCHNEWS* gives information and reporting on actions against the CJA c/o on the fiddle PO Box 2600 Brighton, E. Sussex.

READ OUR LIPS!

We said class war, not Clause 4!

FOLLOWING ON FROM our last feature on the Labour Party in *Organise! 37*, a few thoughts on Clause 4.

Modernising Labour

In his attempts to 'modernise' the Labour Party, Tony Blair and his supporters have made a big push to drop Clause 4, which apparently pledges that Labour will take industry into common ownership.

Much ink has been wasted, and much breath, in defending the sacred text, by both Labour Party left social-democrats like Tony Benn, Trotskyist entrists and Stalinists like the *Morning Star* team. We are called upon to defend CLause 4 by practically all the sorry range of leftists.

Irrelevant

Our attitude is that we do not give a damn about Clause 4. Every Labour government in the past, pledged to common ownership, has carried out vicious attacks on the working class, breaking strikes, establishing wage freezes, attacking workers' self-organisation and passing repressive legislation. As well as running down the health service, transport and other social services.

Apart from that, Labour's (false) idea of common ownership means that the State runs capitalism, or parts of it to be more precise, because Labour have always been committed to a mixed economy. This has always been and will always be for the benefit of the ruling class.

European nationalisations

The large-scale nationalisations carried out after WW2, were also carried out in other parts of Europe by, for example, De Gaulle, the military man in France. Capitalism needed to restructure and rebuild after the war effort and State intervention was seen as crucial in bringing this about.

For us common ownership, that is anarchist communism itself, means that the land and the means of production and distribution are looked after by the mass of the population, and administered through mass assemblies and workplace and community councils freely federated together.

To defend Clause 4 furthers the myth that somehow Labour is on our side.

Clause 4 was never meant to be implemented. It is a pious statement to camouflage the real nature of Labourism, that is a party there to fool, divert and when deemed necessary by the boss class, to govern us, the mass of the population, the working class.

Racism in Tower Hamlets

TOWER HAMLETS IS one of Britain's poorest boroughs, about as working class as you can get and you'd think this should give the area some potential for revolt. In fact it's achieved infamous status as the place where racial violence is commonplace and where fascists got elected.

Since the British National Party temporarily gained a seat in the local council, the number of racist attacks in the borough, mainly against Asians, has been rapidly rising. 'Incidents' range from verbal abuse and threats to near murder and the number of serious attacks has more than doubled in the past year.

Predictably, the police have been pretty lukewarm in actually getting anyone for the vicious attacks on Quddus Ali, Mukhtar Ahmed and Shah Alam. Also predictably, a lot of this claptrap is swallowed by a significant minority of white working class people. Then there's the middle class leftist do-gooders (Labour, SWP/ANL, etc) who thrive off working class disunity — some even make their careers out of it. They tend to loathe the white working class people and patronisingly look upon Asians and black people as their 'pets'. Though they have quite a high profile, they are generally distrusted by all sides.

The high level of racism among sections of white working class people is obvious. Housing has been seen as one of the main causes of this racism — the myth that if you're Asian, it's dead easy to get a council flat. In fact it's really hard to get a council flat whoever you are. If you take Millwall ward where the BNP got elected, you'll find Asians in a tiny minority — hardly a case of them taking all the houses!

Beackon and fellow specimens of the 'master race' spread their filth in Tower Hamlets.

And this possibly gives some indication of the source of the racism. Anyone who is familiar with the borough will notice in some quarters a kind of racial segregation not totally dissimilar from apartheid. Certain estates are almost totally Bengali while just round the corner you'll find another estate which is almost totally white. The same goes for local schools which are often unofficially segregated along racial lines. In other words, the local state has been involved in some pretty effective social engineering down here.

This all amounts to good old-fashioned divide and rule. In a borough like this, where working class people of all races could unite over poverty, housing, unemployment and poor wages, we end up squabbling over crumbs. Fascists like the BNP take advantage and serve the boss class well and help ensure working class division. The left don't help either with their patronising views and their dead end strategy of 'Vote Labour' electoralism to break the BNP.

Revolutionaries who live and work in the area (and indeed in other areas where the issues are similar) need to be pushing the idea that we have more in common with people of our own class whatever their colour, than with bosses, politicians, middle-class do-gooders, religious leaders, leftists and fascists who might be the same colour as ourselves. It is these parasites we need to throw off our backs. This may seem like a tall order but there are plenty of black and Asian people who are keen to get stuck in. What with recent rent and Council Tax rises from the Labour council, it may be possible to build resistance by organising around these issues as well as anti-racism/fascism. After all, it is a genuine combative working class unity which will weaken the stranglehold of racism and fascism.

they put in overtime in building a case good enough to convict the Tower Hamlets 9. (The Asian youths who fought to protect a community vigil, after the near murder of Quddus Ali, from police attack.) Quite rightly, local Asians are angry, with some young people prepared to use violence to fight the racists and fascists — and the police — while others appeal for calm and to trust politicians, community police and the obviously racist police.

In Tower Hamlets 'race' is a giant political football. Liberals talk in terms of the problems being six of one, half a dozen of the other (which it obviously isn't). I'd say quite a lot of white people possibly go along with this view. From the fascists you get the usual racist drivel — unfortunately, a

Tower Hamlets ACF members

There is a concentration of ACF members in Tower Hamlets. If you would like to work with us in local activities, write to the London address.

ACE

Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Anarchism — As We See It. A new, revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary libertarian theory and practice. 60p & SAE. Just a few left of this, but the 6th printing will be out very shortly.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter- revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.

Basic Bakunin. A revised edition of our very popular pamphlet on one of the founders of revolutionary anarchism.

The Myth of Labour's Socialism. Just a few copies of this one left, so get'em soon! Describes the nature of a Party set to administer British capitalism again.

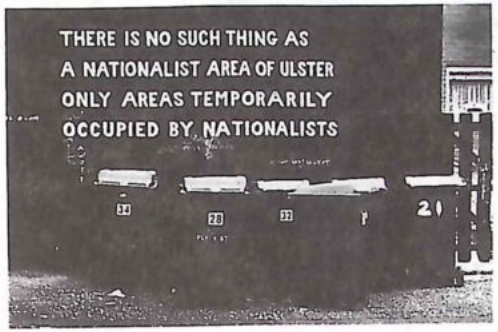
COMING SOON! *Manifesto for the Millenium* and a pamphlet on ecology.

Aspects of Anarchism. Collected articles from the pages of *Organise!* on the fundamentals of anarchist communism. 30p & SAE.

Making Progress is out of print at the moment.

The 'new' Loyalists

IT'S FAIR TO say that rarely do revolutionary journals focus much on Ulster Loyalism (and Unionism in general). It's taken that Loyalism represents political reaction at its blackest. Our analyses of events in the Six Counties usually concern either the manoeuvres of the State or the politics of the Republican movement, the former as it is our explicit enemy and the latter because of its claim to be socialist. Loyalism tends to get dismissed because of its monolithic nature, its hand in glove relationship with the Northern Ireland State and its support for imperialism — why bother criticising something so definitely in the enemy camp?



Well, since the ceasefire, many people have been puzzled to hear Loyalist spokespersons talking about the need for a new, working class, perspective, a community politics beyond the sectarian divide and even of 'socialism'. This rhetoric has emanated mainly from the leadership of two 'fringe' political outfits, the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party. The UDP, the unofficial political wing of the Ulster Defence Association, originated in a late '70s Loyalist think-tank, the New Ulster Political Research Group. The PUP, formed in 1979, is the political mouthpiece of that other paragon of non-sectarian virtue, the Ulster Volunteer Force. Both parties have made a point of their opposition to the 'establishment' unionism of the Ulster Unionist Party and the 'religious fundamentalism' of the Reverend Paisley's Democratic Unionists, whom they accuse of having ignored the interests of their working class constituents. In return they have been attacked by some of the 'established' Unionists as 'Reds' in Loyalist colours.

However, despite the populistic vitriol thrown by both UDP/PUP at the 'fur coat brigade' of conservative Unionism, the fact remains that for all their socialistic rhetoric both parties are opposed to any independent working class self-organisation which might undermine their power base. Indeed the 'leftism' of their 'progressive unionism' is far to the right of even the sickly social democratic Unionism of the now long-dead Northern Ireland Labour Party. It should also be remembered that only a short time prior to the ceasefire and their media-fuelled propulsion into the limelight, these born again 'socialists' were amongst those who presented the UDA 'Doomsday' document of January 1994 with its (albeit empty) threats of ethnic cleansing via repartition. Nor should it be forgotten that the combined Loyalist military command had, prior to the ceasefire, been engaged in a ferocious escalation of sectarian slaughter against working class Catholics. In this context the anti-sectarian talk of Gary McMichael, David Ervine etc should be seen for the hypocritical blethers that it is.

So why have we seen the rise of the UDP/PUP since last Autumn? Neither party having an electoral mandate (a few councillors between them) they claim the mandate of the "silence of Loyalist guns". Their role as 'representatives' of grassroots Loyalist opinion has put them in a prestigious position but their 'moderation' and commitment to a 'New Northern Ireland' — never outlined in any detail of course — has meant that they have become media darlings just as Sinn Fein's leadership have. Indeed they are presented as the Loyalist mirror of Adams and Co, an image they seem quite happy with.

Their 'moderation', however, seems to some, even within their own camp, as more than a little suspect. The heavy British intelligence infiltration of the UDA and particularly the UVF, leads many to conclude that the shadowy hand of MI5 may be amongst those on the tiller of the 'new' Loyalist ship of the line. Whilst manipulating a political party may take more effort and involve more dangers than controlling a death squad, the rewards may be worth it.

This is not to doubt that there exists a confused and angry mood amongst many working class Protestants, but that the UDP/PUP exist more as recuperators of that disenchantment than its simple expression.

Regardless of the extent of Britsh State manipulation, it appears obvious that they are 'playing the game' far better than their Establishment rivals and the 'hard men of Loyalism' are duly reaping the rewards in the form of media attention. Their vague quasi-socialism (which has more in common with Strasserite left-wing fascism than social-democracy) may prove to be a vote-winner in some working class Protestant areas and the cause of a few sleepless nights for the UUP/DUP, but theirs is a politics of despair (their 'Ulster nationalism', half-hearted as it is, is pure nonsense — and they know it) offering little more than a continuation of the status quo under a different party flag and a new crew of political gangsters at the helm.

With working class Protestants disillusioned with their political leaders, the potential for populist demagogues is considerable, but the questioning of old certainties and the political state of flux, also opens up opportunities for libertarian revolutionaries to get their arguments heard in places in which a monolithic siege mentality had made it near impossible before.

Loyalist and other Unionist ideas can be challenged, just as other bankrupt nationalist ideas can. The non-alternative of the 'New Loyalists' must be as ruthlessly opposed as that of their elder brethren.

The Friends of Durruti

London ACF have produced a pamphlet on the Friends of Durruti, a much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936.

In their criticisms of the leadership of the anarcho-syndicalist unions they represented an important moment in anarchist history. Included are an historical introduction written by an ACF member, and two political statements from the Friends themselves. This will be the first in a series of pamphlets in the Stormy Petrel series. Coming up will be a pamphlet on the Italian Factory Councils of 1920-21.

Copies of the Friends of Durruti pamphlet available from ACF(London) c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p including postage.

Cuba, Castro and crisis

AS ONE AFTER another of the so-called communist states collapsed, the whole gamut of those who claim to be Leninists were thrown into disarray. Groups like the Socialist Workers Party were able to dodge the flying debris from the collapse because of their theory that these countries were state capitalist in the first place, and some more orthodox Trotskyists, like Workers Power for example, were self-contradictory, calling for a political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist dictatorship of Castro whilst at the same time demanding that the "degenerate workers states such as Cuba" be defended and that "should the present crisis result in any military clash with US imperialism, revolutionaries must unconditionally support the Cuban army and militias". As the army is part of the State directed by this Stalinist dictatorship, as any Marxist should know, these muddle-heads seem to have got their contradictions in a twist!

The bulk of those who claim to be Bolshevik, though, immediately saw Cuba as the last bastion of socialism and rushed eagerly to its defence. These included the Stalinists of the *Morning Star*, Communist Party of Britain and New Communist Party, the born-again Stalinists of the Revolutionary Communist Group (who have also discovered Shining Path of Peru as a saviour of the working class!) and fragments of what used to be the Trotskyist International Marxist Group, like Socialist Action and the Communist League.

Communists collaborate

In March 1952 Batista set up a dictatorship in Cuba. He received the support of the Communist Party which attempted to infiltrate the bureaucracy of Batista's State. He allowed them to set up an official union confederation, the CTC, with Lazaro Pena as its Secretary General. In return for this, the Communists ensured that no working class opposition would be allowed to develop against Batista. Two communist leaders became Ministers Without Portfolio in the government. In the tightly-controlled election of 1940, the communists were allowed ten seats in parliament and more than a hundred in the municipal councils. Attempting to fill the vacuum in the opposition to Batista left by the communist's support for him, a young lawyer and bourgeois politician called Fidel Castro launched an armed attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953. His programme was reformist and social-democratic through and through, but he succeeeded in uniting various political currents including some anarcho-syndicalists (one of whom, Boris Santa Coloma, died in the failed attack). Castro and his followers were imprisoned, and after having been pardoned in a few months, left for Mexico. The communists denounced this attack, by the way, as "bourgeois putschist".

Above: Glum Genralissimo-Castro prepares to change course.

By the end of 1956 Batista had alienated all classes, from big business to the working class and peasants. The anarchist ALC (Associacion Libertaria de Cuba — which grouped all the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists who had survived the bloody repression of the '30s) decided to form an alliance with the bourgeois democratic opposition! (Another shameful failure of traditional anarchism, and anarcho-syndicalism in particular, to take a revolutionary position. This should be ranked alongside Spanish anarcho-syndicalist participation in the Republican government of Spain in 1936, and the Mexican anarcho-syndicalist Casa del Obrero Mundial's support for Carranza and Obregon against the Zapatistas).

From militia to army

Armed attacks now broke out on a wide scale. None of these were instigated by the Castroists. In one of them, an attack on the Presidential Palace, all the guerillas were killed, including their leader, Echeverria. Despite Castro's Moncada attack, he now denounced the Palace raid. After Castro overthrew Batista, Echeverria and his group were made martyrs of the Revolution and the date of the attack, March 13, is celebrated as a landmark of Castro's revolution. A naval mutiny broke out, and sailors distributed weapons to workers and peasants. This was bloodily crushed, but a second front had been opened in the hills, again not under the control of Castro. Fierce resistance broke out in the cities. In this situation, Castro disembarked by boat with 82 followers. The movement that developed, the 26 July Movement, was still not under Castro's control till later on. As Theodore Draper in his *Castro's Revolution* noted: "It included those who merely wished to restore the bourgeois constitution of 1940 and those who demanded a 'real social-revolution'. It attracted those who admired and those who detested the United States. It took in fervent anti-communists and ardent fellow-travellers". Castro began setting about gaining supremacy of this movement. As his lieutenant Che Guevara enthusiastically wrote: "It was necessary to establish a rigid discipline, organise a high command and set up a Staff... Fidel addressed the troops urging a more strict discipline...he also announced the crimes of insubordination, desertion and defeatism were to be punished by death". Thus, a militia was turned into an army. A volunteer grouping in which members who availed themselves of the right to withdraw were now called deserters and subject to be shot immediately.

Persecution

Once Batista was overthrown, Castro went about purging anarcho-syndicalists and social-democrats from the CTC union confederation, under the pretext of removing collaborators with Batista. In fact, many of these had been opposed to Batista and had been persecuted and imprisoned. The communists were rewarded by Lazaro Pena being confirmed as Secretary-General of the CTC. They had supported Batista up to the last three months of his regime, when they saw the writing on the wall and moved over to supporting Castro!

Castro, anxious to maintain power, now moved from his social-democratic programme to alliance with the Soviet Union. He turned Cuba into a huge sugar plantation for the Soviet bloc. He liquidated all the other resistance groups, accusing any who dared to oppose him of counter-revolution. Of course, many of the landowners, businessmen, army leaders and police chiefs who had supported Batista fled, but this cannot account for the mass exodus from Cuba, before emigration was virtually cut off, of half a million, which included tens of thousands of workers and peasants.

Early in 1960 the Cuban anarchists took a stand against Castro, and their publications were suppressed. They were driven underground and then into exile. They had seen what was being inflicted on the working class. The CTC under communist control signed away any gains that had been obtained — the right to strike, job security, sick leave, 30 days paid holidays, four paid holidays, 44-hour week with 48 hours' pay, overtime at time and a half, double or triple rate and much else — all this went in November 1959 — all in the name of 'voluntary' sacrifice. Those anarchists who cried out against the new regime suffered badly. Alberto Linsuain had joined the guerilla forces in the hills, in a unit commanded by Fidel's strongman brother Raul. He incurred the wrath of Raul even then, having violent disagreements with him. A vendetta was pursued after he began organising amongst the restaurant and food workers. He was murdered or died in jail. Sondalio Torres was accused of 'counter-revolutionary' activities. In order to force him to inform on other workers, he was dragged in front of the firing squad four times and four times 'reprieved'. Jose Acena, lifelong opponent of all the Cuban dictatorships was given 20 years, despite carrying scars on his body from Batista's torturers! Alberto Garcia fought in the ranks of Castro's 26th July Movement. He was given 30 years' hard labour.

Indeed, Castro quickly established horrific concentration camps. Mario Chanes originally supported Castro and was offered top government jobs. Already disillusioned with Castro's authoritarianism, he chose instead to work in a brewery. Shortly afterwards he was sentenced to 30 years in prison, for plotting to kill Castro, a charge which he denies to this day. He emerged from jail in 1992, becoming the longest-serving political prisoner in the world. On an offshore island, now a foreign tourist resort(!) Chanes notes that: "We were beaten religiously by the guards every day. Some prisoners were bayonetted or shot when they collapsed from hunger or tiredness. It was a concentration camp". Because he refused to wear prison uniform, saying he was a political prisoner, he was put into solitary confinement for six years. His wife had given birth to a son eight months after he had been imprisoned. He saw the child once before solitary confinement, and not at all during it!

Drugs

It is likely that the Cuban State engaged in widespread drug trafficking to gain much-needed cash. The Colombian drugs supremo Pablo Escobar, was given VIP treatment by Cuba and by its then ally, Nicaragua, under the Sandinistas. Then, in what has come to be the worst political scandal faced by Castro, General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, who had been hailed as a revolutionary hero when he led the Cuban forces in Angola, was accused of drug trafficking and corruption. He was executed, along with Colonel Tony de la Guardia, a leading light in the special department of the Ministry of the Interior, charged with obtaining the vital foreign exchange necessary for international trade. The scandal brought down 14 top officials, five per cent of the Central Committee and hundreds of military officers. It is likely that those executed and imprisoned were sacrifices made to Castro's turn from state drug trafficking when pressure from the United States made it too risky. In its usual draconian fashion, the State handed out a 30-year sentence to De la Guardia's brother, for failing to denounce him, despite the fact that he was in Angola throughout the period of the drug trafficking.

House of Cards

The collapse of the Soviet bloc lost Cuba a $5 billion subsidy and most of its petrol supply. The East European countries also reduced their intake of Cuban sugar which Castro had exchanged for oil, food and technology. Like the East European states Cuba had supplied free housing, healthcare and education as well as some free food and transport. Indeed, compared to other populations in the region, Cuba was comparatively well-off. All this was to come to an end now. Many Cubans became hungry for the first time. The economic blockade that had been inflicted on Cuba by the USA was tightened.

Above: Mario Chanes.

Castro had militarised Cuban society from soon after he came to power. He had set up the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR) and the Organisations of People's Power (PPO). These are not genuine bodies of self-organisation as the leftists would have you believe. They are packed with Communist Party members and act as regional, local, street and block extensions of the state. They are patterned after the Russian counterfeit 'Soviets', there to rubber-stamp the decisions of the ruling bureaucratic class. They report on absenteeism, dissidence, even what they regard as immorality and

Below: The Commander-in-Chief — just another Stalinist dictator.

sexual 'deviance'. Castro is a classic example of the repressed, prudish Leninist puritan. He detests homosexuality. In the '70s he denounced young people for wearing long hair and tight trousers in the case of boys, and miniskirts in the case of girls and for liking 'decadent literature'. Part of his response, apart from banning these things, was the introduction of compulsory military service. He stated that the high juvenile delinquency rate was due to 13-16 year olds being exempt from criminal punishment by the courts. In May 1973 he reduced the age of legal liability from 18 to 16, and introduced tough penalties up to life imprisonment for 'crimes against the national economy', and 'abnormal sexual behaviour'. The crackdown on homosexuality, and the forced segregation of AIDs sufferers, as well as the generally repressive attitude towards nonconformity of any kind, accounts to some great extent for the continued high number of refugees to the US.

In line with the old Marxist principle of the militarisation of labour, first elaborated in the *Communist Manifesto* and carried out avidly in Russia by Trotsky, the Castroist State used compulsory military service to provide military units to carry out work in construction, irrigation and production. In education the technical colleges were turned into military centres. Students lived under strict military discipline and completed their draft obligations whilst they studied.

The CTC recognised the partnership of the state, the Communist Party and the unions at its 13th Congress. These would cooperate to increase production, "promote punctual attendance at work", "follow the Communist Party directives". Wages are linked to work quotas. Purchase of TV sets, fridges, washing machines etc, is allotted to those who obey orders, overfulfil work quotas, are patriotic. Those paragons of wage slavery are also allotted the best holiday resorts and first access to housing. At the First Congress of the Communist Party in 1975 the slogan "From each according to his ability; to each according to his WORK" was displayed in huge letters.

In 1991, Castro added to his State organisations for the repression of the Cuban masses. The People's Rapid Response detachments were set up. These were groups of thugs charged with attacking any dissident. To their credit, many Communist Party members refused to serve in these gangs. A group of 150 attacked the home of Francisco Gonzales, chair of the National Council for Civil Rights, an unofficial group which monitored the number of Cubans who went missing at sea whilst trying to leave the country. Three months' later, an armed gang returned and threatened his life. (Since then he has been framed and now faces 15 years' prison).

Castro and his regime are immensely paranoid about any opposition. A group of working class people were imprisoned in the early '90s for daring to set up a Green grouping. In August this year, the Cuban military sank a ship hijacked by refugees attempting to flee, and forty died. In a wave of anger, riots broke out in Havana and Castro was forced within the week to lift the ban on emigration. In the next five weeks, 20,000 took to the boats. Castro had already had to pass Law 141 in September 1993, which allowed the regime to start introducing a mixed economy, and a new private sector in some trades. Income tax has been introduced, and depenalisation for Cubans to obtain, hold and use foreign currencies. Less emphasis is now being put on Marx, Engels and Lenin, and more on Jose Marti, the 19th century nationalist leader. The economy is in an appalling state. In a country rich in citrus fruit, no oranges can be found in the shops. The US embargo is blamed, but many are asking why, if trade from Mexico and South America is not affected by this, is the situation so desperate? In Havana there are power cuts of up to 14 hours a day. The power plants have been out of spare parts since 1990. Extreme rationing and huge food queues are the order of the day.

Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss!

Now the Statist economy is opened up to the market, and with the end of restrictions on foreign currency, in entire sectors of the economy, US dollars are the only money accepted. Half of telecommunications has been sold off to a Spanish company. Canadian capitalism is moving in in a big way, and Canadian mining companies are penetrating the minerals sector. Spanish, Scandinavian, German and Italian tour operators are opening up a tourist trade of up to half a million people a year.

Castro and his fellow bureaucrats are prepared to open up to the market in the same way as their East European counterparts. They are doing this because they want to preserve their power and privileges. They are prepared to sacrifice state capitalism to the market and the mixed economy. In the process they will transform themselves into factory owners, entrepreneurs or remain ensconced in the state apparatus — that is unless they are overthrown in the process by the Cuban masses. Another possible scenario is a coup d'etat or attempted coup d'etat by those wedded to the old Leninist principles, found particularly in the military.

Whatever happens, whether the present bosses remain in charge or a new mob take over, the horrors of state capitalism will be replaced by those of market capitalism. The Cuban working class of town and countryside must begin to re-organise itself, learning from the old anarchist tradition in Cuba and from the many mistakes committed by the traditional anarchist movement. They will not fare any better under a new economy, as the sharks of international capital glide in to gorge themselves.

What is happening in Eastern Europe will be repeated in Cuba. The only solution is the development of a broad-based anarchist communist movement, which rejects both the market and the state forms of capitalism, and which starts to develop an independent working class politics.

Overpopulation — or a bit rich?

HUMAN POPULATION HAS skyrocketed in the last few centuries — in the nineteenth century the world population more than doubled. Population growth is a result of a decline in the death rate rather than a boom in the birth rate. The birth rate peaked between 1960 and 1965 and has been slowly falling since. The growth in the 'developed' countries of the West has been slowly grinding to a halt. As the birth rate slows it will catch up with the declining death rate — this could take up to a century or more in Africa and Asia at present rates, however.

Malthus

Are there too many people for the earth to support? Thomas Malthus (a 19th century clergyman) was the originator and populariser of 'overpopulation' theories. He maintained that human population exponentially outstrips food production — that it is always and everywhere pressing against the available food supply. War, disease and starvation for the poor were the inevitable result as: "Man cannot live in the midst of plenty. All cannot share alike the bounties of nature". These disasters were also the 'natural' solution to the problem. Malthus opposed contraception, or feeding people who would otherwise starve, as this would only lead them to ~~~ate more, worsening the general misery. The overpopulation ideology emerged with the beginning of industrialisation and the resulting immiseration of the common people and class conflict. People were driven from their lands and dispossessed of the commons (a traditional source of food in hard times) by wealthy landowners and sheep farmers, and shovelled into the mills and mines. This class brutality was sanctioned by the application of Adam Smith's theories of a self-regulating political economy to 'natural law'. The surplus of workers kept wages down, which was good for business — this translated into a 'surplus' of population. Society was held to consist of Hobbes' "War of all against all". This Social Darwinism, combined with eugenics (the genetic control and 'improvement' of breeds) was used to justify colonial conquest and legitimate reactionary immigration policies at the turn of the 20th century. Ultimately it led to the eugenics-based extermination of psychiatric inmates, Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals etc, by the Nazis in their death camps.

Overpopulation theories are currently used by the Development Bank to justify the industrial development of sensitive wilderness areas such as Western Brazil, and economic planners using tirage analysis (a battlefield medical operation where certain of the wounded are left to die so as to concentrate on those with a better chance of survival) Millions of people in Africa and Asia are left to starve in order to restructure capital and pay off the national debts of countries such as Mexico and Chile. Since the Cold War, the American State's strategy to 'contain communism', control political developments and resources has been to use population control to prevent nationalist revolt in Africa and Asia. This is done through collaborating with local elites through military aid and the establishment of state-dominated institutions for population control. The US agency for International Development is the biggest single funder of population control activities in the South. The anti-abortion stance of the Reagan administration was a sop to the Right, and was only for domestic consumption. The focus of the present population control establishment is authoritarian and technocratic. Sterilisation, intra-uterine devices, the Pill and other risky forms of fertility control are preferred to traditional methods and barrier techniques. The ideology is based on three tenets:

1. Rapid population growth is the main cause of the South's development problems, particularly hunger, environmental destruction and political instability. Development ie capital accumulation, is the main thing and people are 'units'.

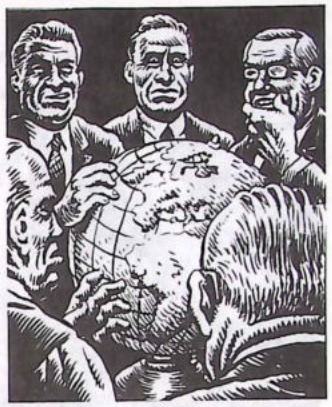
2. People must be persuaded/forced to have fewer children (in Indonesia the Army has forced IUDs on villagers at gunpoint) without fundamentally improving their impoverished conditions.

3. With the right combination of finance, personnel, technology and Western management techniques, birth control can be delivered from the top down, without basic health care systems.

Hunger

There are 900 million dying of starvation a year in the world, but no global shortage of land. The UN estimates that there is enough land to feed a world population of 14 billion people (more than double the present total of nearly six billion). As in the 'developed' North, large landowners control the vast majority of land. In 83 countries, three per cent of farmers control 79% of farmland, much of it left unplanted in order to maintain profits. Their yields are also consistently lower than small landowners. Brazil has an area of farmland the size of India left uncultivated while 20 million rural poor are landless; the richest one per cent owns 15 times as much land as the poorest 56% of Brazilian farmers. In Guatemala two per cent of landowners owns 66% of the land, in the Phillippines agribusiness producing sugar, cotton and pineapples for export has pushed 12 million peasants into the lowland forests.

Drought in Africa was part of a millenia-long cycle. Cash crop exploitation, the market economy and taxation have led to starvation rather than drought. During the hunger crisis in the 1970s, ships in Dakar port which brought in supplies of 'relief' food, departed with peanuts, cotton, vegetables and meats. Of the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of agricultural goods in Sahel exported during the drought, over 60% went to consumers in Europe and North America, and the rest to elites in African countries.



In Bangladesh, often cited as the model for the Malthusian argument, 90% of the land is worked by sharecroppers and labourers. Many starved after the 1974 floods while hoarders stacked up four million tons of rice while the majority were too poor to buy. Multinational companies made over seven billion dollars a year profit from the South in 1990, and probably far more through transfer payments. They use their economic power to force down rice, coffee, sugar, cocoa and cotton prices. Average prices in 1989 were 20% down on those of 1980. This leads to an increase in foreign debt for Southern countries with consequent increased economic hardship for the majority poor (higher taxes, inflation, etc).

Cash crops go to feed the global supermarket, and yield higher profits for international capital to industrialise the planet. Mexican soil and labour supply 50-66% of the US market for many winter and early spring vegetables. The result is that agriculture for local consumption is squeezed out and the prices of staple foods rise. One third to a half of the total meat production in Central America and the Dominican Republic is exported, mainly to North America. An increase in poverty is accompanied by a rise in cereal production (the main component of the

poor's diet). So the 'Green Revolution' which it was claimed would feed the hungry has been used by the ruling class to supply the global supermarket.

Resources

One justification for population control is pressure on resources shown by deforestation, desertification, water pollution etc. Yet fewer people do not necessarily consume fewer resources. The industrialised North with about 20% of the world population (1.2 billion people) consumes over 80% of its resources, 70% of the energy, 75% of metals, 85% of wood, 60% of food. These figures obscure the vast disparities of wealth both within the South, and in the North. The world's largest companies control 70% of world trade, 80% of foreign investment and 30% of Gross Domestic Product. Multinationals are also directly responsible for 40% of the world's greenhouse gases.

Mitarism is the most environmentally destructive modern institution. It's cumulative effects far outweigh the effects of population pressures — the Allied bombardment of the Gulf and Saddam Hussein's oil fires for example. War directly damages the land and air, and destroys the environment through destabilising traditional communities, creating refugees who flee and settle on fragile soils which cannot support them. In Africa between 1955-1985 there were over 200 attempted coups, creating over eight million peasant refugees who fled their villages to escape terror in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan and Uganda. In the last 40 years there have been over 125 wars fought in the South (many of them proxy wars for the Superpowers) leaving 22 million dead. Over 60% of global arms go to Africa and Asia; this military spending kills and damages many more through the waste of resources. The American Pentagon produces more toxic waste than the five largest multinational chemical companies combined: a ton of toxic chemicals a minute. A B52 bomber consumes over 13,000 litres of fuel an hour; an armoured division (348 tanks) over two million litres of fuel a day.

Women

An agrarian revolution is required, as part of a social revolution, which must liberate women. Women are the poorest of the poor, the largest group of landless labourers in the world — even in co-ops and land distribution they are frequently excluded. Women produce almost half of the food crops in the world. In Africa they contribute 66% of all time spent in traditional agriculture, in Asia they are over half of the agricultural labour force, in Latin America over 40%. Commercial farming has favoured men at every level, and industrialisation and urbanisation also hurt women most, destroying their handicrafts and worsening the unjust division of labour with the double day of wage labour and household work. Some 80-90% of low-skilled assembly jobs in Africa and Asia are done by women.

Women's reproductive choice depends on their role in society. Their lack of choice is a direct result of their lack of autonomy, personhood and their economic domination. If women have fewer children they suffer for lack of labour power, if more they are over-burdened and their health undermined. The population question can never be addressed until having fewer children becomes a reasonable option — thus freedom for women from male domination, and an agrarian social revolution reuniting agriculture and nutrition, renewing self-reliance and subsistence, and creating equality. Such a revolution will overthrow high-tech agribusiness methods such as those of the Green Revolution discussed earlier: part of the problem, not the solution.

This article is indebted to *How Deep is Deep Ecology?*, 'Women's Freedom: Key to the Population Question' by George Bradford. Times Change Press pamphlet.

Posters and stickers

Bundles of this poster can be got from our London address. Please send a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced an A5 leaflet explaining the basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

The 14,000 stickers we printed off have sold out, except for the ecology sticker which can still be obtained from the London address, if you enclose a donation. A new range of stickers is currently being printed, so stand by for an announcement.

Reason to celebrate?

Anniversary of the end of World War Two

Above: Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill — preparing to carve up the world between them.

THIS YEAR MARKS the 50th celebration of both VE-Day and VJ-Day. The Allied Powers' celebration of victory over Nazi Germany and then Japan. As usual speeches will be given by European and American statesmen in which phrases like "the struggle against Nazism", "the struggle against fascism", "the liberation of peoples" etc will be liberally peppered. But is this really the truth?

Mussolini's rise to power in 1922 made Italy the first fascist country. In 1928 Salazar set up his dictatorship in Portugal. Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 and Nazism opened its first concentration camps. In 1939, after the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, Franco established his murderous regime.

During more than 10 years the Great Powers — France, Britain, USA and the supposedly communist USSR maintained political and commercial relations with these states. All of these powers accommodated themselves, and none of them sanctioned, these regimes.

At Munich in September 1938 Chamberlain for Britain and Daladier for France signed an agreement with the Nazi regime, allowing it to occupy the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia with a German-speaking population — a rich prize for Germany because of its economic and industrial riches. Even when the German Army invaded Poland in September 1939 the Allied bourgeoisie did not flinch. The European Allies declared war on Germany, certainly, but this consisted of a few French units invading Germany to reinforce its first line of defence, the Maginot line (November 1939). The Western European ruling clases couldn't care less about the rise of Nazism, just as much as they were not bothered by the rise of Francoism or Salazarism. Order reigned and that was all that concerned them. What they had been worried about was the social unrest and the popular revolts which had deeply disturbed them since 1917. They were pleased that strong and stable regimes had been installed that would break working class revolt and resistance.

Chain reaction

The Russian Revolution of 1917 had set off a chain reaction throughout the world — the workers' councils in Germany, followed by those in Italy and Hungary, and then the revolutionary collectivisations in Spain. These movements were bloodily destroyed and fascist regimes were installed during or after these defeats. These fascist regimes were to be preferred by the Western allies to the spectre of working class revolt.

Churchill — the great 'democrat' — who was deeply racist and considered blacks as sub-human — never concealed his admiration for Mussolini. What was important for Britain was that its trade routes through the Mediterranean to its colonies in the Middle East stayed open. The fascist regimes installed throughout the Mediterranean area went along with this and the fate of the populations under their boot-heels were of no concern. The British ruling class refused to welcome refugees from the Spanish 'civil war'. France, for its part, set up concentration camps in the Pyrenees to imprison the Spanish refugeees, and these were joined by other refugees from fascism in Germany, Central and Eastern Europe. The Western allies knew the fate of the populations under Nazi and Fascist domination, whether in Ethiopia or Poland, and they knew from 1933 that the Nazi regime was deporting Jews, Commmunists, homosexuals and gypsies. For its part the United States continued economic and commercial relations with Germany. even during the blockade decreed by France and Britain. These continued after the alliance treaty between Germany and Japan. The US traded with everyone, no matter who they were. They entered the War after Pearl Harbour (December 1941) not to 'liberate' the populations of Europe but to safeguard their economic interests in both Asia and Europe.

The Stalinists

The Stalinist bureaucrats were no more 'anti-fascist' than the Western leaders. The USSR had never stopped trading with Nazi Germany. The non-aggression pact signed between Hitler and Stalin was linked to an economic agreement: Poland would be carved up between them and Stalin would take over Lithuania and Estonia. The Jews of the Soviet part of Poland were as much delivered up to the Nazis as those of France. The Soviet lead-

ers only became 'antifascist' when the German state broke the pact by invading the USSR in June 1941.

Just another war

The ideology of antifascism was pushed among the working class in order to divert it from its autonomous class objectives and interests. This mystification allowed the ruling classes of each country to get the allegiance of their populations and to turn them into cannon fodder. Under the banners of antifascism and the defence of threatened democracy, the managers of capitalism stopped at nothing — 38 million dead to defend their interests! The Dresden bombing, the Atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki! The entry of the Allies into the War was only motivated by the need to stop at all costs the new powers that were emerging in this period of world economic crisis (the Wall Street Crash in 1929) Germany, Italy, Japan menaced the vital interests of the Western ruling classes and their colonial empires, that is, the sources of raw materials necessary for their economies. The new powers needed these resources and natural wealth in order to develop their own economies.

Out of this crisis sprang a new world order: the USA (the West) versus the USSR (the East). Once the war was over, the victors concentrated on oppressing and massacring the populations who refused their new order. For example the French murdered up to 80,000 in 1947 during the insurrections in Madagascar, many through being gunned down, many more through hunger caused by French blockades of the insurgent areas. In May 1945, just after the Allies had won in Europe, repression began in Algeria which resulted in the deaths of up to 45,000 murdered by the French. In the repression unleashed by the British in Kenya in 1956, 10,000 were killed and 90,000 interned in prison camps.

Each of these powers in its own colonial or neo-colonial sphere of influence, set up dictatorial regimes as bloody as each other, who defended the interests of their 'antifascist and democratic' masters to the detriment of the working class and peasantry world-wide.

Below: World War 2 wasn't fought to liberate the concentration camp — it was fought to protect profits.

IT'S A WHOLE NEW MALL GAME!

The following two articles were produced by Communist Headache. We are reprinting them to gain them a wider audience and to further contribute towards our investigations into culture.

Football and architecture: The control of pleasure vs. the pleasure of control

A RECENT SINGLE issue that has dominated a large amount of the local media space afforded to this region [Derby], and a large amount of my thinking and concerns, has been the proposed move of our local football club ('my club') from its traditional ground to a new purpose-built stadium/leisure complex.

This hasn't had the form of the classical single issue problem that we are familiar with, mostly due to the 'negative charge' it carries as a political generator. There is some political opportunism within football supporting (corresponding to the growth of a highly-visible and very cleaned up independent football supporter movement) but this doesn't encroach into all areas of problems and debate. The other feature of this single issue is the local media handling of the problem — this has been incorporated into the fans' phone-in hour each week on the radio, where callers have the opportunity to adorn the manager's trenchcoat for five minutes and have their say about the running of the team or the club. Thus, we have a sophisticated communication channel (in terms of visibility) and a lack of a vested interest, producing unusual developments.

Almost immediately an approach of considering concessionary measures was taken up, but with a positive outlook. In the past the strategy of developing concessionary measures could be considered as solely reactive to cases where a lock, stock and barrel fight for a cause is totally turned over. The negative aspects of this strategy are most evident when a vested interest occurs, that is, we are kept blindfolded by the actual campaign. This usually takes the shape of a denial of examining the form and function of the campaign itself, as the parties with the vested interest would be exposed, and the taking of concessionary measures in this case is usually campaigning just as blindly but with slightly lowered sights.

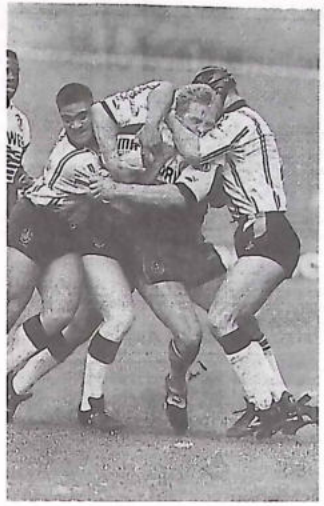
The positive aspect of the strategy is the development of a springboard for assessing all points of our arguments, how these arguments are interpreted by our opponents, the dynamics of the campaign and, not least, its relevance in wider spheres beyond the normally impenetrable barriers of the campaign. The strategy is either negative (and worthless) or positive, and cannot be a combination of the two. In this case, the absence of a political opportunism and the blossoming of the theoretical base of the campaign are obviously related. To stress again, a useful approach would be to aim for clarity and fluidity, to pinpoint relevances and irrelevances, and to examine moves and motivations of people and parties involved.

Returning to the issue at stake, the resiting of a football ground, it seemed that initial response was that the move was a necessity and a progressive measure, a view mainly fostered by the club itself and some of its influences in the local newspaper. However, debate and dialogue on the local radio station (initiated by a programme presenter who was prepared to question the move from personal opinions) gave an airing to a few other ideas, and allowed the issue to expand into a more complex form. At the basis of the disagreement was the question of atmosphere, such that a move would be okay if the atmosphere of the original ground could somehow be preserved or recreated in the new stadium. Thus we have the concessionary measure: atmosphere, but arising in such a form that it immediately demands further inspection as to what atmosphere actually is, and how it arises, is maintained, and is possibly preserved.

This further inspection is still at a fledgling stage, particularly as the heat has been taken off the issue due to financial problems at the club putting the move into doubt. But the potential to challenge and to form a total critique of football as an act in the cultural circus has been activated. These are my ideas on the health of our game taken from the standpoint of where we left the issue — that is the preservation of atmosphere.

Atmosphere

There are many points to consider in this proposed move away from an old ground, but to many the subject of atmosphere is the most important, and also the most difficult (and dangerous) to pin down. There is a danger in refusing to understand what atmosphere actually is, and so leave the negotiating of this concession of atmosphere to the professionals, to the architects who promise to give us an INSIDE of pitch-hugging stands and tight corners where we are able to breathe down the necks of players. But such a move invites them to dictate their definition of atmosphere, and we are back to a strategy of hoping for the best and trusting that some party has all our best interests at heart. How can we pin down the make-up of atmosphere beyond simple architectural factors relevant to the inside of a ground? In the case of our old football ground atmosphere is related directly to tradition, and this tradition is partly constructed from specific instances on and off the pitch in years gone by. Goals, saves, moves, skill, decisions, comedies, fights, pitch invasions. These cannot be preserved, and are uniquely tied to the history of the old ground, but to use this as an argument for staying behind leaves one susceptible to attack. Indeed, it is plainly stated that a new ground will bring new instances and so will begin a new history and tradition, and that the old history will live on in memories even as this new history unfolds. People who cite famous instances from the past and argue the injustice of losing them, are labelled traditionalists,



Above: Sport — the rugby scrum is not the only struggle. Like everything else in society the class struggle at play.

and are dismissed as likeable, but laughable, cranks. However, tradition does not accumulate solely as a sum total of instances on or around the pitch, it is something that is deeply ingrained in football culture, a culture that is linked strongly to the working class. So we have moved on from the idea of atmosphere, the role of tradition in creating atmosphere, and finally to culture in propagating the active role of tradition. It is here that we can take up our negotiation of concessionary measures.

Where are the pies?

Football culture has grown out of the escapism that Saturday afternoon brings, following the enforced division of work and leisure time. The attack on this culture arises as the ruling class try to colonise our leisure time, to control us and spy on us. Leisure time controls our attitude to work, and so it must be constructed in a way to satisfy many tastes and demands. Football supporting offers many other things than an escape from domestic duties, it has a tribal link and the bad-boy image, thus the strict yet diverse fashion trends and accompanying machismo. It is a constructed part of leisure that has fostered some degree of dangerous autonomy — as a system of control it is dangerous as the autonomy that it fosters is both a reason for its popularity and a danger to the authorities. Without concerning some of the fringe activities of football supporting we have a base of putting aside your problems at home or in the workplace, and channelling your energies into watching, shouting and arguing about your team. The packed terrace is the ultimate meeting place where you can yell at the top of your voice, exercise your wit and wisdom, and summon forth an honesty and unrestricted flow of expressions that you have to suppress in everyday life. The situating of football grounds within dense, run-down urban areas adds to this atmosphere, as you can leave the glitz and glare of the manufactured cityscape and its consumption zones, and slowly re-adjust your thoughts to focus solely on the time ahead and the football game itself. Programme and fanzine sellers perched on street corners, local shops stocked up with crisps, biscuits, fags and tins of drink, the joy of knowing that all these people weaving their way to the ground are thinking the same as you; team selection, last week's performance, midweek comments and rumours, this week's opposition.

And so atmosphere does not spontaneously appear, exist and die within the 90 minutes of the match and confines of the ground, it grows from the apprehension as you approach the game and lasts into the joy or suffering after the match, as you cautiously weave your way home chancing a short cut with the thrill of a chase.

Fringe

The fringe activities arising from the autonomy of football culture presented the authorities with a decision to make. In the 1970s hooliganism was put under the spotlight and so intensified as a reaction to this, in turn feeding the media onslaught. The game was attacked with swift moves to intimidate and control supporters, the media having done its job of replacing the identity of the football supporter with that of the hooligan (eg the emergence of phrases such as behaving like a football crowd). What began as frogmarching to the ground soon turned into extensive and visible surveillance and list compiling. I remember my early away matches where we were unloaded from the football special and marched from the station to the ground only to be stopped en route, lined up against an old factory side and scanned by a hoolivan that crawled alongside us! This onslaught of 1984-style surveillance and infiltration culminated in the identity card bill which was eventually defeated. A possible reason for this could be the rise of the independent supporter movement who redressed the balance of identity back from hooligan to the more generic football supporter. The actual winners here are hard to pin down, though without doubt the authorities benefited. The independent supporter movement peddled a semi-notorious image (or half-decent as the figurehead magazine calls itself) that was allowed its own media space to flourish — the fanzine market. For a while the fanzine movement was the be all and end all of football supporting, but its popularity has waned over the last few years as the zines themselves have been filled with academic ramblings lyrically praising the merits of mildly warm bovrils and stodgy pies, and the clubs themselves

have tried to take a cut of the action by allowing sales of certain zines within their official marketing mechanisms. However, the authorities haven't given up (indeed hooliganism is on the rise again), they have just changed their line of assault, and the design and situation of stadiums is the new angle.

We now move from a culture that has grown within the working class that brings people together while supporting autonomy, to a culture that has been thrust upon us, a manufactured culture that goes hand in hand with the classless society we are supposed to live in, that is the culture of the shopping mall. Here we are offered the pleasure to slip around from one orgy of consumption to another. Bright lights to glorify images, marbled floors and high gloss to reflect to the point of infinity, an immersion into the air conditioned nightmare. Shop till you drop, all the names are here. Pig out on any delicacy from fast food to the faddest flavour of the month (but still fast), entertain yourself in our bowling halls, cinemas and amusement arcades... this perfected spectacle is seamless. Bad weather? We can take care of that by eliminating weather all together, a constant temperature maintained and ample carparking underneath to shield you from getting wet

I live quite close by to Meadowhall, the grand-daddy of all shopping malls, and often find myself gauging (and gagging on) the atmosphere of the mall, from the frenetic attempts of store assistants to get you to buy (the space rent is monumental — no charity shops or second hand outfits here) to the glamour, technology and global mix of the coca cola food oasis. But the atmosphere (as in the positive sense of the word) is not there, thousands of people avoiding eye contact and communication (but maintaining style checks on each other), a mixture of lethargy and a gluttony of excess. Not just a million miles away from my football ground, but a million miles away from the morning markets in town hawking cheap vegetables and second-hand clothes.

The 'mall'ification of football grounds would be a shrewd move in the attack on football culture. Why try to control the actions of people who are in an agitated and threatening state of mind, when you can control their state of mind directly? The all-seater stadium and the purpose-built leisure complex is a direct attack on the mental set of the supporter, using the convenience of run-down amenities (run down by the greed of the clubs themselves) to justify itself. The media talks about the positive aspects of the Taylor report which is little more than using the Hillsboro disaster to shit on the people most concerned and horrified about the disaster itself. We must never forget that nearly a 100 supporters died, and many others suffered immense pain, because of a foul up between the football authorities preventing the possible loss of some of their income and the police dealing out the type of treatment they have been getting away with for years. How would this 'mall'ification manifest itself? The keywords are shopping and leisure (the new forms of leisure)... arrive at some wasteland project out of town and connected by a fast new road, a guaranteed parking place within five minutes of the stadium-complex) what do you mean you enjoy walking to the ground?, the chance to do a bit of shopping in the club shops (new team fleeces and a fourth away strip just in stock!) or any of the similar sports shops, the chance to grab a bite to eat at the latest 25-till computerised Macdonalds/Pizza Hut, and then you can plonk your backside in a bucket seat — a splendid view just beneath the main stand executive boxes — to take in the pre-match entertainment. But don't worry, we can keep the atmosphere by building the stands close to the pitch and letting the corners hug the pitch perimeter! But what about that exquisite state of mind that you used to acquire while making your way to the match, the feast of communication transmitted and received, the buzz that lasts well into the evening?

Clout

It is this culture that gives clout to the sense of tradition that we try to explain, a tradition that enriches the atmosphere at our football matches. Personally I do not think that the atmosphere will be recreated in a new super stadium on some re-developed wasteland, because the atmosphere is so much more than the 90 minutes' playing time. But we are heading into the whole new ball game era, where money, products and brand names do all the talking. The old is being cleared out for the new, making it safe for the business faces and media moguls to vest their precious millions in.

And so is there a realistic concessionary measure of atmosphere within all of this, as this is what the original argument for and against the move was based on? In truth it is a difference in definitions, on the one side we have a rich vein of autonomous and mutated culture, and on the other we have the new culture of total entertainment (to mask total control).

The latter will always have the ability to try to appeal to the former, opening some dialogue around architecture and design, under the auspices of the democracy we are all lucky enough to live in. And anyone not happy will be dismissed as 'traditionalists' longing for a bygone era that hasn't quite passed by. Well, not yet anyway.

We will have further articles on sport in the next issue.

Class War and sport

IN THEIR ENDLESS pursuit of the perfect romance with all that is working class (be it 'genuine' or stereotyped) Class War have no hesitation in appealing to the football fan as part of its political platform.

Their coverage used to consist of reports of hospitalised coppers and imaginative terrace chants, and this used to sit quite merrily alongside stories of the queen mother being a werewolf etc. As the paper tried to develop an ideological angle it opted for a program of working class 'culture' and community-based struggles, and the fight of football fans against government proposals (the ID card bill) and greedy chairmen (eg Maxwell at Derby) encapsulated both culture and community. Can we really expect a political autopsy of football without facing contradictions, and how can we consider, as communists, the difference between supporting football teams as a community of interest and engaging in the class struggle against evil boardrooms. At most clubs throughout the country the boardroom is under fire because it won't spend vast amounts of cash on transfer fees and huge wages, and on the surface this seems to annoy the fans as much as the boardrooms that impose increased admission prices and yuppified stadiums. @Reclaim the game@ is nothing more than sheer populism which falls apart at the slightest analysis. I enjoy spectating on a team of wealthy superstars as much as I enjoy my twice-weekly kickabout with my mates, but I don't see any logical similarity between the two and I certainly don't want to reclaim one into the other.

Recent events have been even more surprising: Class War described the rumpus at Millwall v Derby as not a particularly good night out, it bloody wasn't, as Derby fans were ambushed with baseball bats and black players were showered with a torrent of racist abuse. They also declared the highlight as the trashing of Radio Derby's van... well how much of football culture involves dependence on the local radio for those matches you can't get to? Does it logically follow that come the revolution Brian Moore will be first up against the wall?

Class War have also taken to defending boxing due to its working class tradition. Certainly one of the most amusing spectacles recently occurred at the NEC during the Mac Cracken Foster fight when the boxing was held up as rival football gangs were at it hammer and nail in the aisles using fists, boots, chairs and steel bars! Oh well, all in the name of reclaiming the game.

Communist Headache can be contacted at PO BOX 446, Sheffield S1 1NY.

Dear *Organise!*

The article in Issue 37, warning against 'moral panics', ought to have been shown to the individual responsible for the pieces on pornography and the sex industry. Then we might have been spared two pages of unadulterated crap and could have read something up to your usual standards. Having let off steam, I can face the gruesome task of picking through the rubbish piece by piece.

"Punters often bring pornographic magazines to show prostitutes what they want to do". Apparently this is because the 'sex industry' thinks that all women are whores (shock horror). Listen, E.T... on this planet practically everybody is a whore of one kind or another. That is, they will do all sorts of disgusting things for money. Some people sell or portray sex for money. Others sell food, medical care, housing, drugs, weapons, religion for money. Why is it the sale of sex especially outrages this clown?

"Our sexuality is deeply personal. While sexual acts with others are a basic act of communism, as we freely give ourselves in a mutual exhange of pleasure". Well that must be fine for s/he or it on their planet, but in the real world this wonderful state does not exist for a great many people. Sex being a basic human drive they must therefore either go without (easier for some than others) or settle for whatever compensations they can get.

"The sex industry is highly patriarchical. It promotes...the male as the fucker, the female as the fucked". Yes and sometimes the other way round too. But that fact is inconvenient isn't it? If the sex industry tried to sell any fetish or 'perversion' that customers didn't want, it would soon be out of business. You can't change sexual tastes by propaganda. But apparently only politically correct 'mutual sex' is permissible to the writer.

The double-think in the next paragraph is truly classic. Having displayed all the human understanding of a fundamentalist bible-thumper, the writer warns us against our 'moral guardians' the church and the state. What about the 'moral guardians' pictured below who apparently believe that liberation will be achieved by ripping up harmless magazines containing pictures of naked women? It does not occur to these morons that any sort of literature can be ripped up. The price of freedom to distribute our own ideas is tolerating other peoples. What if *Playboy* or *Penthouse* were to suggest their readers went around trashing feminist literature? That's what I would do if I were them and they have a damn sight more readers than any feminist or anarchist mags do.

The gist of the rest of the first article, that all prostitutes are conscripted by a combination of force and drug addiction, and that any act committed by a client is rape (I wonder what victims of real rape think of that idea) is so ridiculous that I'm not going to bother to argue with it.

I'm not trying to pretend that the sex industry is some sort of humanitarian social service or that it does not damage some people. But why should it be singled out? Don't practically all capitalist industries damage their workers, destroy the environment and exploit poverty?

As for the piece on pornography, if you want to argue porn leads to rape and other sex-crimes, it's a theory, but it doesn't explain why countries like the Netherlands and Japan, where pornography and prostitution are more freely available than in the UK, have lower rates of sex-crime.

The second piece seems to be trying to blame pornography for every evil under the sun. Racism — apparently a preference for black, Asian or Oriental women is a 'fetish'. What about a preference for blondes, brunettes, red-heads? If only white women appeared in pornography would that be non-racist? Sorry, I forgot, we aren't allowed sexual preferences any more. Come the revolution we will be assigned sexual partners by anarchist-feminist social workers after demonstrating that we perform only permissible acts in the approved non-sexist way. (Yeah, I'm getting carried away).

The point I'm really getting to is that the average punter, attracted to a re-cycled copy of *Organise!* by the naked man and 'pornography' on the cover (you wouldn't have dared to use a naked woman would you?) will turn to the article in question and find themselves confronted with the ravings of a sex-obsessed crank. Another piece of mostly worthwhile propaganda bites the dust. It would have been better to put the far more sensible Avedon Carol interview first and used the other as an example of the kind of lunacy she was talking about.

Depriving people of sex-magazines and videos will not lead to individuals going out to form 'relationships' in their 'community' or to protest about East Timor etc. Most of the evils attributed to the 'sex industry' are due to something else, poverty. That being so, it would be more useful for Anarchists and Feminists to direct their propaganda or even some of that famous direct action into campaigns for realistic benefits, pensions and minimum wages than to preach the sort of moralistic delusions worthy of the right wing press.

By the way, I'm not a rapist, pornographer or pimp, I'm on the dole. You've no idea what a hassle it is to get your giro cashed in Bangkok!

Yours etc, JW, East Ham

Article writer replies: This, unfortunately, is fairly representative of the level of debate on this subject. Personal abuse is not argument. Also, the idea the sex industry is being singled out for criticism when everyone is abused by capitalism is nonsense. *Organise!* covers a wide range of subjects, why pick on one? It's called analysis. All exploitation outrages me, not just the sexual kind, but few workers are quite so blatantly exploited as sex workers.

Punters using porn to direct prostitutes are not differentiating between the two groups, but using them all as their own sexual tools. There is very little porn where women are in a dominant position unless of course the man wants it that way, and then they are not really dominant at all. Porn commodifies sex by fetishising differences, for example hair colour, race or clothing. Porn uses racist stereotypes implying that coloured people are more animalistic. This is not sexual preference, it is sexual commodification.

Porn does not cause rape, but it is often a contributory factor because of the way it portrays women. Most rape takes place in the home where these ideas affect people's attitudes. Also many serial rapists and killers have fixations with porn, though many other factors are involved in their behaviour.

Capitalists spend billions on marketing/propaganda to influence ideas and demand. Media barons are hugely powerful because they control ideas. Sex for capitalism is a commodity. The product is constantly updated and customers are encouraged to find their particular niche in the market. People get their sexual ideas from society, porn influences these ideas.

The mass media controls thought and opinion pretty effectively, porn magazines do attack feminist ideas if you read them. It seems to be okay to forcibly silence the likes of fascists, so why not porn? Whenever action against porn is mentioned its apologists immediately start screaming about free speech and censorship. Defending the 'rights' of capitalists is liberal crap. They are only harmless in your opinion, which is not an opinion held by many other people.

The article illustrated how sex is increasingly used by the mainstream media to titillate while providing no real information. While we are being told about the irrelevant sexual antics of minor celebrities, the capitalists are left free to plunder.

Using other people for your sexual whims is blatant exploitation (try masturbation instead!) Given a real choice would you choose to sell your body? People are forced into prostitution mainly by economic necessity and also sometimes by violent partners, and many prostitutes do use drink and/or drugs to desensitise themselves, because believe it or not they don't enjoy being fucked by anyone with a few quid.

You cannot deny exploitation merely by dismissing every indicator suggesting exploitation. That is just conscience salving. If you actually have an argument then substantiate it, this letter is merely excuses and opinion without substance.

If we are ever to see an anarchist communist society then people are going to have to take responsibility for their own actions and consider the effects they are having on others. Sex is not an exception to this!

Dear AFC, [Sic]

In your issue No 36 Oct-Dec 94 you published an article entitled 'The Working Class Against the ANC', in it you attack groups and parties on the far left as being "Capitalism's last line of Defence" and also of enthusiastically supporting a vote for the ANC-SACP-COSATU Alliance before the election, then suddenly discovering after the election that this alliance was betraying the working class.

While we cannot speak for other groups or parties, we must protest at this description being applied to the WRP (Workers' Press). Not only did the Workers' International of which the WRP (Workers' Press) is the British Section stand candidates against this alliance, but for years before fought internationally against the ANC's torturing of their own members who disagreed with their policies. See the enclosed pamphlet *Mutiny in the ANC 1984*. We have included some back copies of Workers' Press containing articles and statements with the relative dates and passages highlighted from before, during and after the election attacking the ANC Alliance. See also the Election Manifesto of the South African Workers' International in Workers' Press dated 26th February '94 and the election issue of *The Worker* (Workers' International of Namibia) with solidarity statement and statement on the ANC-SACP Alliance highlighted.

Our comrades who were candidates in the South African and Namibian elections were at times threatened with their lives and showed great courage in their stand against the ANC-Stalinist Alliance. The comments in your publication do you no credit. While we do not expect agreement on our respective policies, printing lies does not take the working class forward one inch. If you have any political principles, you will print this letter in your next issue together with your correction.

NB I am a member of the WRP (Workers Press)

Eds reply: Yes, we did make a serious mistake by saying that the WRP supported the ANC-SACP-

COSATU alliance. We can assure our readers that everything else in the article was accurate! However going back to the WRP — or the Workers' International as they insist on calling their South African section, standing their own candidates in the election, let's look at some of the positions they stood on. The WI calls for the withdrawal of COSATU from the government alliance. This is meaningless — the COSATU leaders are almost completely members of ANC and/or SACP and would not allow this to happen. Even if they were not members of these parties, the fact that COSATU is co-managing South African capitalism shows how the trade unions are as much a part of heading off working class revolt in South Africa as anywhere throughout the West. Such a demand creates illusions in the trade unions as indeed does the electoralism of the WRP and its sister sections. They give credibility to bourgeois democracy by participating in election farces (incidentally the WRP have consistently called for a 'critical' vote for Labour in this country — not a last line of defence for capitalism? — who are you kidding?). On to some of the other demands like the call for a revolutionary workers' state and nationalisation under workers' control. The illusion that somehow the State is a body that can be captured and successfully used as an institution of liberation goes against all that we have seen in the past century. Do you really think that nationalisation of the land, farms, banks and all other sections of big business means that the working class will collectively own and control them? No, it is the capitalist State that will control them. Finally, it ill behoves the WRP to accuse us of lies (lack of research — yes!) when

MILITARISM

Cont from back page

from the cost of developing and maintaining the military in peacetime (how many jet fighters equal a hospital) the cost in war time is measured in blood. Workers' blood. It is an undoubted truth that anti-war movements organised by official trade union and labour movements have usually at best been hopeless failures and at worst, complete betrayals. The ignominious collapse of the Second International's policy to oppose the so-called Great War of 1914-18 comes into this category.

It is perhaps the constant and subtle techniques of mass persuasion which accounts for the apparent enthusiasm for wars by large sections of the working class. This misplaced faith in the State and the Nation has had disastrous consequences. Given the current capacities of the nuclear war machine, a future major war could prove to be diabolical. The war against militarism has never been more important.

it is a remnant of the gangster organisation led by Gerry Healy, and counts Cliff Slaughter as its leader. This was the man who slavishly followed all of Healy's instructions, who devotedly churned out hatchet job after hatchet job on the WRP's political enemies, who sat on the WRP Central Committee that year after year chose to ignore Healy's sexual abuse and rape of young female Party members, the self-same Central Committee which turned over scores of Iraqi workers to be horrifically tortured to death by Saddam's secret police so that it could get funding.

Dear Editor

Last December ten women from our group, Bristol Women Against Pornography, held an action at Menzies in Temple Meads Station during rush hour. This involved ripping up the pornographic magazines on the station forecourt. Some women handed out leaflets and talked to the public who were generally sympathetic.

Five of us were arrested and charged with criminal damage. We are pleading not guilty because we believe that by our actions were preventing greater crimes from being committed. Pornography causes the rape, torture, sexual abuse and murder of women and children.

In compiling our defence we are trying to raise funds for expenses; child care for defendants, general administrative costs and potential fines. If you would like to support us please send any donations with cheques made payable to Bristol Women Against Pornography, Box 13, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.

Thank you
RS for Bristol Women Against Pornography

Ticket to poverty

Dear *Organise!*

Anyone tempted to play the National Lottery might be advised to consider the political implications. A lottery ticket is the ultimate capitalist commodity. It costs £1 and is an absolutely worthless piece of paper to all but a small percentage of 'winners'. Such is the nature of all capitalist commodities to a degree. The consumer pays for profits to make the board members, owners, investors etc very rich wherever possible. The surplus value on a lottery ticket is virtually 100% for most tickets. The fact that a percentage is given to charity is virtually irrelevant. No charity could ever cover the costs of the capitalist profit/poverty syndrome.

AA (Edinburgh)

Eds reply: We draw readers' attention to the following quote from George Orwell's *1984*: "The Lottery, with its weekly pay-out of enormous prizes, was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention. It was probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive. It was their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant. Where the Lottery was concerned, even people who could barely read and write seemed capable of intricate calculations and staggering feats of memory. There was a whole tribe of men who made a living simply by selling systems, forecasts and lucky amulets."

Canadian confusion

Dear ACF,

Greetings from Canada! First of all I'd like to say that I think *Organise!* is a great magazine. I always look forward to reading it and it is always full of information and revolutionary spirit.

Secondly, continuous revision of our ideas is necessary for any revolutionary process. I believe that the ACF and many other anarchists need to change the way they look at national liberation movements. You must realise that people of colour have their own cultures of resistance. Many so-called anarchists have been openly antagonistic towards national liberation movements like Black Nationalism and native sovereignty. Being opposed to national liberation struggles means being opposed to Puerto Rico's struggle against Amerikkkan political, economic and military domination. You are also opposing Palestinians' fight for a homeland. What about the national liberation movements that freed Africa from European domination? What about the Vietnam war of liberation against French and Amerikkkan imperialism? Why do some anarchists oppose national liberation struggles? Is it because they can't control them, or is it because of a subtle kind of racism? Revolutionary anarchist and ex-Black Panther Kuwasi Balagoon once explained why anarchists should support national liberation movements: "It is not only racism but compliance with the enemy to stand outside the social arena and permit Amerikkka to practice genocide against the 'Third' World captive colonies because although they resist, 'they' don't agree with 'us'". As anarchists, if we ever want to advance the revolutionary process then we all should support national liberation movements, fight white supremacy, and work to bring about communities that respect cultural diversity.

KK, Ontario, Canada

Eds reply: Well in fact, the ACF is in a minority in its positions on national liberation. Too many anarchists are either ambivalent, confused or take a favourable attitude to national liberation. Why is the guilt-trip of "You must be racist not to support national liberation" always brought up? (See previous correspondence in *Organise!* in particular No 32.) Are you really serious when you talk about Africa being freed from European domination? Don't you think that the European powers, and indeed international capitalism, still dominate Africa directly through armed intervention — the French within their very wide sphere of influence in their old colonies, and the US and France-Germany through their intervention in Somalia? Don't you think that Africa is still dominated by the commands of international capitalism, through the World Bank and the IMF? Do you think things really changed when 'independence' was achieved in the African countries that had been European colonies? Take Kenya for example — one of the first colonies to break from the British. Now an alliance was formed between the European imperialists and a class of newly-propertied Africans, and the exploitation continued (read Ngugi wa Thiongo's novels on Kenya — an African not blinded by guilt who can see the reality of exploitation). This was the pattern all over Africa. Many used the genuine desire for liberty and equality amongst peasants and workers to come to power. Kenyatta could not denounce the Mau Mau forest fighters and the peasant insurrection without committing political suicide, but he neither wished to support it or be compromised by it, only to profit from it for his own political ends.

The nation-states built on the frontiers decided by the colonialists saw the immense cultural richness and diversity of Africa as weaknesses, and new forms of authoritarian rule were perfected to keep these artificial nation-states together.

National liberation movements were movements of the newly-emergent or about to emerge ruling class. They sought to channel the forces of peasants and workers to their own ends. Inevitably there were those who wished to establish capitalist models immediately, and those who adopted Marxist-Leninist rhetoric to establish command economies more or less on the East European model. This reflected the power struggle between the two major power-blocs at the time.

We do not support national liberation precisely because we are revolutionary internationalists. We support the actions of the Palestinian masses where they break with the politics of the new ruling class under Arafat or with the rival would-be ruling factions under the control of Syria or Iran, and where they break with the forces of Islamic fundamentalist obscurantism and reaction. We support the actions of the working masses wherever they fight both the forces of colonial occupiers and the home-grown ruling class

Continued overleaf

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* — as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 3rd June for features and reviews, and 10th June for letters and news.

ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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Organise! will continue to improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Coming up!

ARTICLES TO BE **featured in forthcoming issues of *Organise!*:**

More on Sport; Art and Anarchism; Struggle in China — Past and Present; What's Going on in Kurdistan?; Greece and the Greek Anarchist Movement; Algeria — a Plague on both their houses; The Myth of the Underclass; Nicaragua, the Sandinistas and the People; Big Brother — Computerised Surveillance; A series on figures from revolutionary history including Sylvia Pankhurst and Guy Aldred, as well as little-known women and men who made great contributions to the revolutionary movement; the revolutionary poetry of Shelley; Anarchist Communism and Ideas — A look at Modern Thinkers.

Sounds interesting, eh? Then subscribe now!

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YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN! Not as good as last issue, maybe, but still highly encouraging. £1,000 from a London comrade! £60 from Sheffield; £204 from East London; £1.20 Liverpool; £50 Northumberland; £20 Germany; £2 London; £15 East London; £25 Anon; £4 Anon.

But we still need money to make sure *Organise!* keeps coming out, our pamphlet publishing venture carries on, and our new posters and stickers appear. So rush any sum, no matter how large or how small, to us. Everything will be gratefully received. Send us cheques, POs, IMOs, stamps, diamond necklaces, gold doubloons!

You can even send us a standing order to our account. ALL donations to London address.

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists.

We have members and groups throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Please write to the national address if you want to be put in contact.

LETTERS *Continued from page 18*

and attempt to create a free communist society. But this is not national liberation but international revolution. As it says in the latest *Proletarian Gob*: "It is condescension or a form of racism that allows anarchists to support national liberation movements in other countries, when they should know that the interests of these movements are opposed to those of workers (us!)".

It's only natural!

Dear *Organise!*

I fear that the writer of the Aspects of Anarchism article on Human Nature (no 37) has grabbed the wrong end of the cliché. If human nature is fundamentally good and can be ameliorated by increasing knowledge then we all could sit back and leave the onerous task of running our lives to the great and good, their heads overflowing with brains. Alas and alack, the history of hierarchical societies shows that leaders seldom exhibit greater benevolence to others than to themselves. In fact anarchist communism is pessimistic in outlook, mistrusting the nature of both leaderships and individuals in the form of the market whose self-interest decides against theoretically combining to give an outcome of optimal utility for all. The unemployed, homeless and impoverished are well aware of this.

Of course human nature is not all of one colour, either good or bad. In fact our view of what human nature is predisposed to, is more determined by our political beliefs than the other way round. Human nature is not a quantifiable fact and if it were, we should still be wary of the naturalistic fallacy of deducing what ought to be from what actually is. Aristotle for example, thought slavery natural because all the societies he studied had slaves. Neither does anarchist communism come from idle speculation of abstract concepts that would make an 'ideal' society. Where anarchist communism's theory and practice ultimately differ from other political theories is that we are not propounding a view of human nature or form of future society but inviting people to make it themselves.

AM (Sidcup)

MILITARISM

OF ALL THE 'ISMS', militarism is the most poisonous, destructive and dangerous. When active it destroys people, cultures and rational thought. When relatively passive (though it is never truly passive) it enters the minds and value systems of society in a way which reinforces conformity and obedience.

Military values require uniformity, not only of appearance but also of attitude and values. The armed forces expend considerable effort in ensuring that the soldiers at all levels accept without question the inherent and unquestionable superiority of their methods, aims and ideology. In the heat of battle there is no scope for questioning of the validity of the campaign or particular assault. Robot-like acceptance is paramount.

Militarism, the glorification of military values and methods, has a long history. In Europe, Asia and South America that undoubted symbol of militarism, the military uniform, and with it distinct armed forces, have existed for thousands of years. Witness the carved reliefs of the Assyrians looted from Iraq and currently at the British Museum which show the disciplined armed ranks engaged in warfare. These are well over 2,500 years old.

Military values also accept without question the validity of hierarchy. Orders start at the top and are passed down to the ranks. Whilst there is scope for individual decision-masking — no large organisation can cope without imagination and initiative — this can only be permissable within the strict and rigid structure of the chain of command. Despite scepticism within the ranks, in the final analysis orders are there to be obeyed. Obedience is an essential feature of the military approach and, in wartime, failure can lead to severe punishments.

A further feature of the military approach is discipline. The soldier, sailor or airforce person must act as part of a team, exercising self-discipline in all circumstances. And this self-discipline must be an extension and internalisation of the wider military discipline. Discipline, hierarchy and obedience combine to realise most effectively the ultimate aim of military values, the activation of violence.

Since the days of the spear and bow, military technology has pursued a single goal, the most effective destruction of the enemy with the minimum losses to one's own side. The armed forces of the world's most powerful nations possess killing capacity that make Dresden and Hiroshima look like tea parties.

Militarism is the application of military methods and values to the wider society. This is done most effectively when it accompanies some other so-called truth such as religion, racial purity, imperialism and nationalism. In its most effective expressions — Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia — all opposition was either eliminated or cowed and the whole society subjected to military methods and organisation, leading ultimately to war. Whether racial nationalism in Germany or 'socialism in one country' in Russia (leading to the 'Great Patriotic War') the identification of nation with militarism was a powerful concoction. More recently there have been pale imitations such as Saddam Hussein's 'adventures' in Iran and Kuwait, with the resultant impoverishment of civilian life in all senses.

With the re-emergence of religious fundamentalism as a significant force, combined with nationalism and militarism, a truly powerful cocktail of destruction is being concocted. This is not new, imperial Japan used it to good effect, but it appears to be on the rise again. Imagine a Christian/imperialist/militarist USA saving the world in accordance with professed religiously inspired values!

Militarism is not restricted to dictatorships. It insidiously permeates many corners of life in so-called democratic societies. Young boys in particular are subtly and not so subtly inculcated into militaristic approaches of behaviour and thought. Organisations such as the Scouts and the various cadet forces all apparently stress individual growth and adventure but also promote military ideas and values. Should anyone be sceptical on this point, one should compare the uniforms, 'adventure', camps and other methods of building group uniformity of the Scouts with those of the Hitler Youth. The similarities are remarkable.

Whilst not wanting to over-exaggerate the importance of militaristic youth organisations, they are symptomatic of an underlying militarism in capitalist society. Violent video computer games are seen as a threat, whilst kids fingering sub-machine guns and clambering over tanks in armed forces publicity events is widely seen as OK.

The British military presence in Northern Ireland has further deepened and extended public acceptance of militarism. The fact that the British armed forces have systematically used repressive violence to maintain capitalist order has barely raised a murmur on the mainland. Problems are only perceived when a British soldier is killed or maimed (or imprisoned for gunning down an unarmed civilian). The British soldier is raised up on a pedestal, and even when convicted of murdering a civilian is considered to be innocent by the Establishment and mass media.

The annual poppy day rituals at war memorials throughout Britain remind the populace of official recognition of the importance of the armed forces. Whilst they are hypocritically designated as honouring those who were killed or wounded in war (whilst insulting the widows and handicapped by poverty level allowances) they effectively glorify war. In particular they make sacred the whole system of the military machine by investing it with a religious/patriotic/emotional/ quality. War, all war fought in 'British interests' is thus legitimised and placed beyond criticism.

Spectacles such as these keep public interest in things military at a fairly constant level, ready to be mobilised in time of the ruling class's need to go to war. They, and the accompanying propaganda are a part of a mythologising process which legitimises all past British military actions. And, by extension, serve to do the same for any future conflicts.

Militarism, whilst low key in the so-called liberal democracies, has been given a new dimension and magical quality in its association with advanced technology. There are no limits on what technology and science are supposed to be able to offer. Never mind the fact that so much military advanced technology does not seem to work or results in the wiping out of the 'home side'. Death by 'friendly fire' is unfortunate but it is quickly forgotten compared to the crimes, real or invented, of the enemy.

Not only is technology presented as an ever-improving means of overcoming the future enemy but it is our technology which is presented as superior, thus reinforcing the militaristic arrogance of the gullible population.

Strangely, for weapons of mass destruction, the never-ending additions to the military arsenal are often presented in a benign manner. Fascination with new technology has been harnessed to give the state's murder machines a sexy quality. Look at that fighter bomber, admire its curves, its smooth lines, its power, its performance.

This ties in with the cult of masculinity which reaches its height in the armed forces. The parody of what males should be like is shown in the hardness, the brutality, the excessive drinking, the segregation from women in many parts of the armed forces in every country, which lead on to brutal attacks on civilians, as seen recently with the Paras in Britain, the Greenjackets in Cyprus, and the torture and killing of a Somali by Canadian Paras keeping the 'peace'. It leads on to the mass rape by soldiers — witness the systemised rape by Serbian soldiers as a form of terror, the rape of tens of thousands of women by Red Army soldiers when they invaded Germany at the end of World War 2, only just admitted to. Any idea that the Armed Forces are institutions which women should participate in, is dangerous rubbish. The best thing that working class women can do, to benefit themselves and their class, is fight to dismantle the Armed Forces!

Fortunately, but not always effectively, militarism has usually been countered by anti-militarist movements. Indeed revolutionary anarchists have always taken a lead in anti-militarist activities. It should be obvious to everyone (but isn't) that the people with the most to sacrifice and the least to gain from militarism are working class people. Apart

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T/SOR/16/18

ORGANISE!

for class struggle anarchism

60p
Summer 1995
Issue 39
(Free to prisoners)

PRISON SPECIAL

INSIDE

Class Struggle in the Prisons

Saddam v the Masses Algeria:

A Plague on Both their Houses

Whose Heritage?

And loads more!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists.
We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.
2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.
3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.
4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.
5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.
6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.
7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc).
Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery.
Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may streng-then us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves. 8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.
9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceeded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise ourselves on a federative basis.
We reject sectarianism and work for a united, revolutionary anarchist movement.

ACF NEWS

No. 3 of the Irish ACF bulletin *Irish Resistance* is now out. See article in this issue. We've produced No. 2 of *London Resistance*, our free newsheet, available from London address. You can get this free by writing there enclosing cost of postage or SAE.

The newly-formed Liverpool ACF have produced their own free newsheet *Merseyside Resistance*.

You can get this by writing to PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP, enclosing cost of postage or SAE.

A new ACF group has sprung up in Hastings in East Sussex. If you live in the area make contact by writing via the London address. Ditto if you want to make contact with comrades in the Basildon/Barking Romford/Dagenham area.

Active Resistance the youth magazine of the ACF should be appearing during the Summer as should our cultural magazine devoted to all aspects of culture, art, film, literature, sport and music. Watch out in the pages of *Organise!* for details.

Posters and stickers

Bundles of this poster can be got from our London address. Please send a donation. Or get a single copy and photocopy 'em.

London ACF have also produced a leaflet explaining the basic ideas of anarchist communism. Again, send a donation for a bundle to the above address.

We still have the ecology sticker available, and by the time you read this we should have four new stickers available — on homelessness, anti-capitalism, etc.

Clegg sprung by media

AS WE EXPECTED, Private Clegg has been released from jail after an orchestrated campaign by the ruling class media.

Clegg is a member of the Paratroopers, elite corps that are a feature of most military set-ups. They are composed of the hardest, the most psychopathic elements in the Army. Horrific training, designed to break the individual and then build them up again as an efficient killing-machine, is used to squeeze out any humanity, and make the Para an obedient order-taker, an obscene parody of what males should be. They are detested and feared by other Army units. If indeed any unrest develops in the Army — yes it could, in the right circumstances, even in a professional Army — the Paras would be used to quell any mutiny, as indeed they would be used to smash any large-scale social unrest (but the equivalent of the Paras couldn't save the Shah of Iran from being overthrown by mass action, despite the extraordinary brutality of these thugs). The Paras were responsible for the massacre of 13 on Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland, as they were for other shootings and beatings there.

What is the hidden agenda of this campaign? Is it to organise resistance in the ruling class among sections opposed to the peace talks with the Republicans? Or is it designed as an excuse to allow for the release of Republican and Loyalist prisoners? As yet this is unclear. What it did spark off was massive rioting among the Catholic working class, not completely orchestrated by the Republicans.

Looting in Luton

Talking about rioting, the three days of riots in Luton, followed by a riot in Leeds, pointed to the depth of rage amongst the working class. Particularly among the young, involving both white and black, who demonstrated a determined resistance to the police. The simmering discontent in British society is ever more apparent to the boss class, who will attempt to hose down the flames of revolt by calling in the social fire brigade, the Labour Party at the next election.

The Conservatives

The divisions within the ruling Conservative Party that helped oust Thatcher came to the fore again with the leadership contest. With the backing of the pro-European wing of the Party, Major remained in the saddle. But the contest revealed the depths of the crisis within the Conservative Party over Europe, a crisis that may yet tear it apart. This split in Tory ranks effects the whole of the British ruling class. The needs of British capitalism continue to dictate that this pro-European wing, whether in the Conservative Party or the Labour Party, will end up triumphant. Those sections of the boss class, pining for the days when Britain was a first league World Power, will be outgunned by those who recognise that involvement in the European Union may help hinder the French-German alliance, or see the creation of a European bloc as an alternative to backing the USA, seeing clearly that they must hitch their wagon to the EU; or again salivate at the thought of a free-trade area covering most of Western Europe.

The Labour Party, sensing victory at the next election have not ruled out an alliance with the Liberal-Democrats in order to gain power, summoning up the spectre of a coalition government along the lines of the National Government of WW2 years. Alongside this are further signs of ruling class backing for Labour. As we noted in a previous *Organise!* Sainsbury, a backer of the Gang of Four, was moving to give support to Labour. This support is now confirmed. The press baron Murdoch is making it more apparent that his press will back labour. Meanwhile the Labour leadership continues to flirt with the bosses' organisation, the CBI.

Above: Private Clegg.

Part of the 'modernisation' process in the Labour Party consists of limiting the pull the union barons have. This characterised the recent struggle for leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union between Dromey, a loyal supporter of Blair, and Morris, representing the old school union bureaucrat, tied to Clause 4 and 'traditional Labour values'. The Socialist Workers Party, who make a habit of coming out with anti-union bureaucrat rhetoric, decided to give their support to Morris in the contest, demonstrating once again that they are one of the external wings of Labourism, and loyal supporters of trade unionism. Of course, once Morris won, he made sure that the T&G was seen as loyal to Labour, making televised announcements of support and paying for ads in national papers. Despite their rhetoric against the bureaucrats, the SWP are prepared to back one bureaucratic faction against another!

An autumn of discontent

The nurses' and midwives' unions RCN and RCM have for the moment headed off any industrial action among their members, agreeing to the derisory pay offers. Unrest is still on the boil in the health service. This may boil over in the autumn, as other sectors in the health service prepare to fight. The unions will do their utmost to head this off, playing on the many divisions between health workers, especially utilising the myth of professionalism. Despite this, discontent is beginning to alter the attitude of many sections up to now not deemed as militant.

The strikes on the trains and underground planned for the summer are firmly under the control of the rail unions RMT and ASLEF, who again will exploit the artificial divisions among the workforce. RMT have already sabotaged all-out action, by using the recent ballot as justification. A repeat of the signal-workers 'victory' may take place. Against this, London tube workers now have a tradition of independent organisation, that may once again break out of union control. If tube-workers can do this again, they must make sure they link up with similar elements among the railworkers, and spread any independent action, so that united all-out strike action takes place.

JOY GARDNER

IT COMES AS not much of a surprise to see the acquittal of three cops charged with the death of Joy Gardner.

Joy, a 40-year-old Jamaican woman, died in July 1993 after immigration police broke into her flat, tied her up with a body-belt and wrapped 13 feet of adhesive tape around her head. As a not very surprising result, she died of asphyxiation and brain damage. This method of 'controlling' people who fought back against the immigration cops was used on a regular basis, and reveals the racist basis of the whole clamp-down on immigrants.

Liberals might be shocked that the cops got off. But how

Continued on p4

HIDDEN HISTORY

IRELAND HAS NEVER been regarded as a hotbed of working class militancy. All too often the focus has been on the actions of Loyalists and Republicans and the sectarian conflict has overshadowed the few instances of workers' unity that have occurred throughout the 20th century.

We feel that as class struggle anarchists it is part of the revolutionary process to publicise our true history: not our history as Nationalists or Unionists, but as oppressed workers.

A major landmark in Irish working class history is the 1932 Outdoor Relief Strike in Belfast, in which people from the Falls and the Shankill fought together against the Unionist government and the police.

When the Wall Street Crash occurred, Northern Ireland's economy was hit harder than most countries, as its principal industries felt the effects of America's financial instability.

Around 100,000 people in the North lost their jobs. Only 42,710 were receiving benefits and the rest had to survive on partial benefits or nothing at all. Many thousands who were unemployed were simply not registered. Due to the poverty (which hit the working class of Belfast hardest of all), outbreaks of TB were commonplace and basic items like food, clothes and fuel were in short supply.

Protest and organisation spread in both the North and the South of Ireland. In Belfast demands made by the Outdoor Relief Workers Committee for an increase in relief rates and abolition of task work were rejected by the Stormont government. As a result a strike was called in October and on the 3rd of that month 30,000 people went on the march.

On Wednesday the fifth, the RUC attempted to block a march to the Lisburn Road Workhouse which failed as demonstrators entered the workhouse and began to disrupt its operation.

The Unionist government was surprised by the actions of their 'loyal' workers who were openly in revolt. They attempted to come up with some paltry concessions which were rejected by the strikers. That night workers called a rent strike and lit bonfires all over the city. On Tuesday 11th the government banned a huge demonstration and then issued the RUC with rifles and brought in units from the Army. Fighting broke out when police tried to break up the meeting and that night workers from the Falls and the Shankill fought side by side against the police. A Protestant called Baxter was shot dead while fighting beside fellow workers from the Falls. Barricades were built and the police redoubled their efforts to break the strike.

Unfortunately, the tactic now employed by the Unionist establishment proved to be an effective one. They encouraged rumours of an IRA plot to destroy the Northern state. They effectively rekindled sectarianism and so laid the way for the defeat of the unemployed workers' movement.

However the workers won big cash increases in relief pay and the city erupted into celebrations as the strikers marked their victory over the government.

The working class of Ireland has proved time and again that they can overcome sectarian barriers and fight together as workers against the State and against the bosses.

The Irish Anarchist Communist Federation tries to keep this tradition alive by reminding people of the hidden history of Ireland.

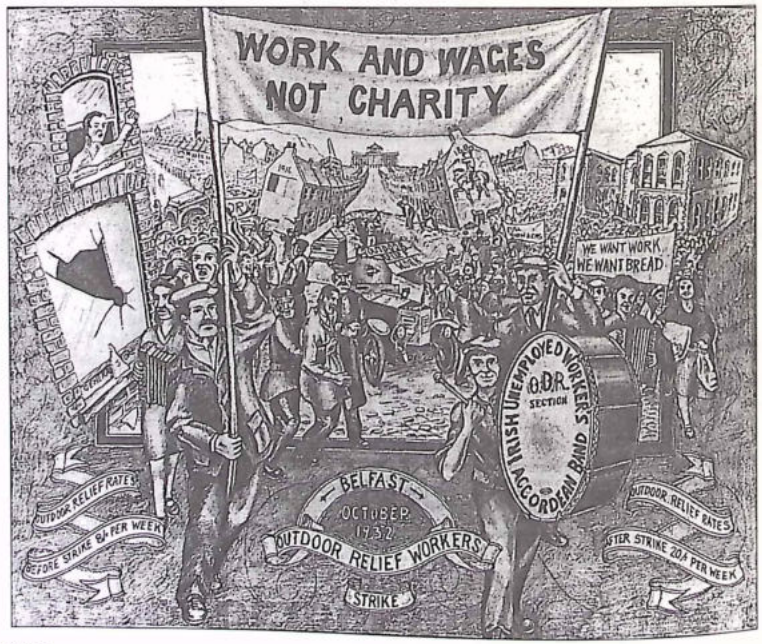
With examples of class unity like this behind us the sky's the limit!

The above article appears in *Resistance No. 3*, bulletin of the Irish Anarchist Communist Federation. Send five first class stamps to receive five issues of the bulletin from IACF c/o PO Box 505, Belfast BT11 9EE.

JOY GARDENER

Continued from p3

many of them or their counterparts in the armed forces have ever been charged, or when charged, found guilty of the murder, beating up or framing of working class people, especially blacks and Irish. Cast your mind back to the deaths of Kevin Gately, the framing of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, of Stephan Kiszko, the murders of 13 on Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland, as just a few examples. No one was ever convicted for these brutal deeds. We cannot expect there to be justice under the capitalist State. Any reversal in the verdicts on framed prisoners was the result of sustained pressure, and even then, judicial whitewashes made sure that those who planted 'evidence' got off with maybe a reprimand. As the old saying goes "One law for the rich, one law for the poor".



Dictator of Baghdad versus the masses

SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS faced several threats to his bloodthirsty regime over the last few years. In the Western press these have been described simply as a 'Kurd' insurrection in Northern Iraq and a 'Shiite' insurrection in the South.

These insurrections received different treatment in the pages of their newspapers. There was widespread coverage of the 'Kurd' insurrection, with little information on the 'Shiite' uprising. The spokespeople of the Kurds, in exile or inside Iraq, were widely reported, whilst those of the latter were largely ignored. There does exist an official 'Shiite opposition' in exile. This opposition has benefitted from the popular insurrection in Southern Iraq.

The Western media, when it wanted information, naturally turned to this grouping. The information which the Western press was supplied with, outside of that given by the Shiite opposition, originated mainly from Iran. It was not difficult to fabricate a 'Shiite insurrection'. Contrary to the Kurd insurrection, there was no documentary film showing this armed 'Shiite' opposition, and it was easy for the Shiites to hijack the insurrection in the media, thanks to an absence of information, the little there was being supplied by Iranian sources (in other words a Shiite state that supported the opposition).

Southern Iraq is made up of marshy lowlands covering an immense terrain around the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates. There are vast areas of water rich in fish and with thick reed-banks. They are an ideal place for refuge. Tens of thousands of Iraqi deserters who had fled the butchery of the Iran-Iraq war, and opponents of the regime, had formed themselves into groups there and were a thorn in the side of Saddam. This region has always been a hiding place for those fleeing repression, long before Saddam. The area is difficult for a motorised army to penetrate. Deserters, militant workers with a price on their head, members of the Iraqi Communist Party, young people fleeing from the various forced labour brigades modelled on those developed by Lenin and Stalin by the Baathist organisations, came here from all over Iraq, and were generally supported by the local population. Saddam attacked the area in the '70s, destroying villages in order to smash support for the refugees of the marshes. When the war with Iran broke out, the local population got some relief at first, Saddam's regime having other matters to worry about.

But very soon, after the first victories, repression intensified. This period was marked by a massive influx of deserters. A resistance was organised which attacked trains, ammo dumps, and military convoys. The number of deserters was estimated at 20-30,000 in 1983.

It is rare for a war not to be followed by a popular insurrection. (Paris Commune 1871, the revolutionary wave after 1918 and after 1945 to a lesser extent). The Gulf War and the defeat of Iraq by the Western powers was no exception. Hardly was the war over than the insurrection broke out. Its intensity and the speed at which it spread were atonishing.

Horrific

Many people remember the horrific photos of Iraqi soldiers fleeing north from Kuwait, burnt to death by incendiary bombs of the American warplanes. President Bush rendered a great service to the dictator of Baghdad by exterminating this long cortege of soldiers, of whom a great part would have joined the deserters in the marshes or the insurgents in the southern towns. Their retreat cut off, those surviving soldiers were thrown into the clutches of the elite Republican Guard, whom the Allied Powers had gone out of their way not to attack. The United States did not want to destroy the Iraqi Army, only to weaken it. They stopped the war in time in order to leave Iraq enough military potential to maintain power. The collapse of the Saddam regime would have destabilised the whole region.

Defeated

It seems at first surprising that a defeated Army managed to deploy itself against two insurrections, one in the North, the other in the south. But on closer examination it was apparent that the Iraqi Army had not been so defeated. In reality the Allied forces had deliberately avoided destroying it. The troops who had been annihilated by the coalition were in the main young conscripts, including immigrant workers (mostly Egyptian) who had been forced into the Army.

Beginning in August 1990, the regime had cleaned out the prisons, massacring the political prisoners, and sending the others — deserters and 'common criminals', to the front. The elite of the Army, the Republican Guard, was placed in the rear so that it could fire on any who attempted to leave the front. The victory of the Allied powers over Iraq was in reality a joint victory of the Baathist dictatorship and Western imperialism over the Iraqi masses.

In the North, the Kurdish guerillas, that is to say the armed forces of the Kurdish nationalist parties, themselves put down the popular uprising, which involved both Kurds and Arabs, liberating Iraqi forces to concentrate on the insurrection in the South. Up to a hundred shoras (workers councils) had sprung up, refusing to acknowledge the authority of the nationalists. One nationalist leader, Talabani, was refused entrance into Sulaymaniyah, whilst another, Barzani, had two of his bodyguard killed by the people of Chamcharni.

Above: Saddam's smirk may yet be wiped off his face!

In the outskirts of Baghdad, in the neighbourhoods of Kazyma, Shouala and Thaoura, insurrection broke out on 2nd March 1991, then again on 13th March, but the centre of power was too close and on the 23rd there was violent repression.

At Basra, revolt broke out on 3rd and 4th March, led by the young men conscripted into the Army, and quickly joined by many deserters. In two days repression smashed this uprising. This was to be repeated at Najaf and Karbala. The Iraqi airforce, with the permission of the Allied coalition, were allowed to use napalm and phosphorus bombs on the insurgents. Helicopters, which had never been deployed during the war, were used to 'pacify' Basra, where fighting ceased on 17th March. The flames of revolt continued to flicker here and there over the month of April, but by the 16th March Saddam had gained the upper hand and showed himself on TV.

The Bush administration wanted to replace Saddam with someone who was more compliant to their commands. Bush explicitly invited the

Baathist party to remove Saddam. The insurrections forced the Baathists to close ranks.

Uprising

The uprising was represented as a religious movement, when in fact the Basra region, with strong traditions of Stalinist militancy and Arab nationalism, has a low level of attendance at mosques. The destruction of the Iraqi Army and an occupation of Iraq by the coalition would have meant that it would have had to suppress the uprisings, which would have met with widescale protest both in the United States and internationally. It was easier to leave Saddam in place to crush the revolts. The Allied massacre of the fleeing soldiers on the road to Basra protected the Iraqi State by destroying columns of armed men who would have reinforced the rebellion.

The war ended not so much because of a victory of the Allied powers, but because of one of the largest mass desertions in history and the refusal of the Iraqi masses to fight, whether they were conscripted in the Army or in forced labour squads.

Between May and December 1990, a large number of strikes had paralysed the economy in every sector: at Mosul, Baghdad, Irbil, Tikrit, Sulaymaniyah, Basra, and Kirkuk. The strikes were against austerity, the unpaid working days 'for the country', rationing, delays in paying of wages, wage cuts and an increase in hours of the working week.

From January 1991, large numbers of deserters took refuge in Basra, Al Amarah, and An Nasiriyah. Hundreds of local government officials, Baathist Party functionaries and secret policemen were shot dead, prisoners were freed, and there was a real pre-revolutionary atmosphere. If the world media obscured all of this, both the local and international ruling classes were aware of the real situation. The war between States was transforming itself into a war between classes, and it was time to form an alliance against the masses. The Dawa, an Islamist organisation in opposition, spoke of the Southern rebels as: "an unprincipled crowd of anarchists, atheists and saboteurs drinking whisky and making love in the holy places". It established contact with the Americans and the Saudis, which up to then would have been unthinkable. The Baathists flirted with the nationalist and democratic opposition. An accord was signed with the Moudjahiddin of the People, Islamic oppositionists in arms, to crush the revolt in the South. Accords were also signed with the Kurdish nationalist leaders Barzani and Talabani to deal with the unrest at Mosul, Kirkuk, and Irbil.

The crushing of the uprising was characterised as destruction of Shiite villages in the Western press, and the resistance has been systematically characterised as such. Despite repression, this resistance continues. Saddam has resorted to a mass draining of the marsh areas, an ecological disaster up to the standard of the regime's firing of the Kuwait oilwells during the war with the Allies.

Sanctions

The sanctions imposed on Saddam by the West caused great suffering for the Iraqi masses, and in many ways strengthened Saddam's position, as he took advantage of the siege situation to portray himself as a national hero, ready to take on the Western powers.

In the long term, however, the deteriorating situation forced many into crime, as they turned to theft and the black market to make ends meet. Saddam resorted to the introduction of Sharia laws — strict Moslem laws — last June, which included amputation of a hand for theft and death for armed robbery. Iraqi TV showed an amputated hand and what appeared to be an unconscious thief in a hospital bed in close-up. Most Iraqi doctors disagree with this amputation, which they were being forced to carry out, and a strike by several hundred doctors was only stopped by the threat of imprisonment. There was widespread anger at these sentences which was vented on the medical profession. Six months ago a crowd stormed the Baathist HQ at al-Amarah and cut off the ears of several Party officials in retaliation for the punishment ordered for draft dodgers and deserters. In al-Nasireyeh a man with a machine gun killed a doctor who had amputated his right hand for theft. Saddam has also jailed several hundred money changers over the last four years.

Elite

As well as the popular opposition to Saddam, rifts in the ruling elite are beginning to emerge. Saddam has clung on to power by relying on Sunni Moslem clans in his heartland of central Iraq. The Dulaymi clan for example is heavily represented in the army, Republican Guard and secret police. The torture and execution of a Dulaymi air force officer jeopardised this support, resulting in a mutiny in the armed forces in the Baghdad region. This was smashed by the Republican Guard, but cracks have now appeared in the solid support Saddam still has among the Sunni elites.

If this disillusion grows, then Saddam can be seriously weakened, and a popular insurrection, which would have to take in central Iraq as well as the North and South, could take advantage of the divisions in the ruling classes. Set against this are the two Kurdish nationalist parties, each fighting for control of the North, ready with their own prisons and execution squads to crush any genuine mass uprising (3,000 have already died in fighting there).

Also ready to intervene would be the Shiite oppositionists, and the Iraqi National Congress controlled by Ahmed Chalabi, a wealthy banker. Behind him stands the Saudi regime and the Americans. These would agree to a return to some form of bourgeois democracy and a deal with the Kurds if this meant the stabilisation of the area and the sabotage of any working class uprising.

And in Iran...

DISAFFECTION WITH THE clerical regime in Iran is increasing as the mullahs are shown to be as corrupt as any secular rulers, and as willing to put the screws on the working class.

In June a slogan appeared on a Tehran flyover calling for "Death to the Mullahs!". Last August serious riots broke out in the northern city of Qazvin in response to the worsening economic conditions. And on the 4th of April of this year, discontent erupted again with riots in the shantytown of Akbar Abad, 18 miles southwest of Tehran.

Discontent

Several hundred migrant workers protested about price rises for public transport and fuel. They overpowered the police sent to quell them, taking their arms. The clerical militias, the Revolutionary Guards, were then sent in, firing on the crowds indiscriminately. As many as 50 were killed. Crowds converged on the area from surrounding shantytowns chanting, "Down with the Islamic Republic, Down with Rafsanjani (the Iranian President), Down with Khameini (the heir to Khomeini, the supreme religious leader)". A news blackout was imposed and thousands of Revolutionary Guards sealed off the area.

The ruling regime is hopelessly split between the 'moderates' who want to open up to the West, and the fundamentalist clerics. A revolution of the masses could overthrow the whole sorry crew. It was mass action that overthrew the Shah and that had the potential of developing in a revolutionary direction with the appearance of workers' committees, before it was hijacked by the clerical reactionaries under Khomeini.

A plague on both their houses — The civil war in Algeria

SINCE THE MILITARY takeover in January 1992 after the Islamic fundamentalists of FIS won a majority at the elections, Algeria has been plunged into a civil war that has claimed at least 30,000 lives. Caught between the two factions, the Algerian people have been subjected to the napalm of the Army and the bombs of the fundamentalists.

As usual, the Western press have obscured the situation, reducing it to a simple fundamentalists v military. Take one example. A general strike against the government took place in February. The same day, an Algerian woman was murdered by the fundamentalists. The Western media reported only on the last event. Who profits from this? Well, institutions like the International Monetary Fund who congratulated the Algerian government on the first successes it had won in "its strategy to integrate its economy into the international economy in liberalising its foreign trade... in giving a more important role to market forces". Yes, a very great victory, with unemployment at 27%, inflation at 27.8% and the situation set to further deteriorate with the government pursuing the same course.

The IMF has presented a plan for structural adjustment accepted by the military regime. Hundreds of nationalised industries have been privatised. This will lead to mass sackings.

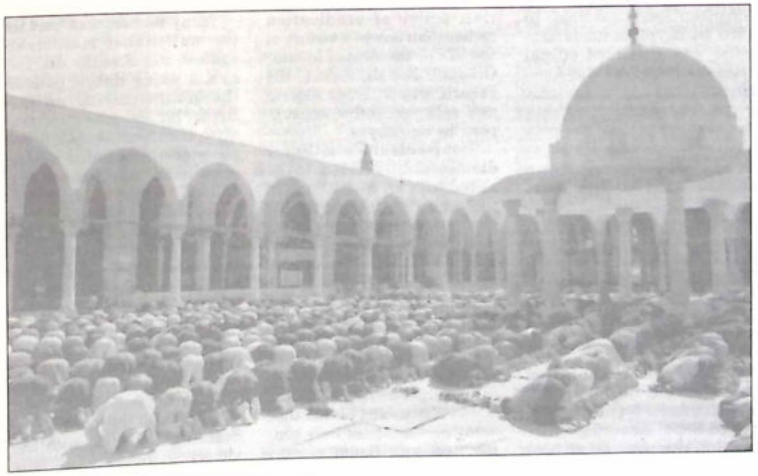
The nationalists who came to power in Algeria did so after a bloody war of independence against the French colonialists. This war had certain aspects of a 'civil war' about it: the struggle between two nationalist factions — the FLN and the MNA — and with the pro-French Moslems. Within the FLN itself, power struggles raged and people like Abane Ramadane, member of the Coordination of the Maquis of the Interior were murdered by their own comrades, as well as founder members of the FLN like Ben Boulaid, who it was claimed at the time was killed by the French.

After independence these struggles continued. The Army led by Boumedienne made sure that Ben Bella of the FLN came to power, and those who objected within their ranks were exiled or imprisoned. Oppositionists were hunted down and shot in West Germany and Spain. The regime has been characterised by frequent 'car crashes', 'plane crashes', 'suicides', 'breaking necks whilst getting out of the bath', among both the military and government officials, signalling internal power struggles. Even the murder of President Boudiaf in recent years, allegedly murdered by fundamentalists, is now thought to be the result of internal power struggles.

Packed

All the institutions — the Press, the single Party, police, unions, mass associations, and of course directors of industry, have been packed with people the regime can depend on; with allies, relations and friends. President Chadli installed practically his entire family in important positions.

It has been claimed that President Chadli deliberately provoked the mass demonstrations of young people in 1988 in order to call in the Army to reestablish law and order. He was thus assured of a united power base, by implicating the Army leaders in a bloody and brutal repression.



The civil war has involved the systematic murder of those very close to the regime by the fundamentalists. But along with these murders took place those of many intellectuals whose death would have suited the military as much as the fundamentalists, like the greatest Algerian playwright Abdelkader Alloula, whose throat was cut in 1994.

The secret police group SM (Securité Militaire, nicknamed Sport and Music) was trained in the USSR, where they learnt torture, manipulation of crowds, infiltration and counter-insurgency. The demos of 1988 were the fruit of one of these manipulations. The demonstrators were then machine-gunned by men in plain clothes. These events were the result of power struggles between different clans in the ruling regime.

The SM has infiltrated the fundamentalist groups and is manipulating them. It was definitely involved in the strikes called by the fundamentalists. Following these, the military agreed to a free press (but who are the journalists authorised to create this 'free press'?). 'Free' elections were organised, but the military had not imagined that the FLN would have such a disastrous result. The military had to annul the elections, and imprisoned the fundamentalist leaders and MPs.

The fundamentalists made their first big public appearance in 1988 on 7th October at Belcourt, a neighbourhood of Algiers, on demonstrations led by the religious leaders, the imams, with 6-7,000 people. Another fundamentalist demo on the 10th was fired on by the military, resulting in 25-30 dead.

The FIS managed to hijack the vast discontent seething in Algeria. Far from being a united organisation it based itself primarily on a rejection of the regime. Since independence, a succession of

leaders like Ben Bella to Boudiaf have imposed Western solutions "inadapted to a country of Moslem tradition" according to the FIS. It has grouped together the most impoverished, the marginalised youth, small shop-keepers and traders and artisans, alongside the Arabising functionaries, with a reactionary and religious programme. It employs an anti-imperialist rhetoric (but not a practice!). It has denounced the deal between the government and the IMF as treason.

There are two main tendencies within it — the Salafists (the dogmatists) who recall the time of the Prophet, and the Dzaraists (Algerianists) who advance an Algerian Mohammedanism and are legalists. It was they who led the FIS into the elections. The Moslem movement is itself disunited. Alongside the FIS are the 'moderates' of Hamas, and the Armed Islamic Groups, led by veterans of the war in Afghanistan: uncompromising, extreme fundamentalists.

The fundamentalists started a campaign of violence in 1989 by burning alive a nurse who had physical contact with men in the course of her work, and the fire-bombing of a flat belonging to a teacher in a women's liberation group. In February 1990 women students were attacked at Constantine University. At Blida a woman student was flogged in April 1990, and the flat of four divorced women firebombed. This did not stop them winning the municipal elections in June 1990.

What of the other political currents in Algeria? For its part the PAGS (Party of the Socialist Vanguard), the rechristened Communist Party, took the side of the regime as it had habitually done in the past.

At its last conference in 1993 it saluted the Army and Police, going on to say that the market economy was the way forward and supporting the measures imposed by the IMF. It transformed itself into the Ettahadi (Party, State, Progress and Modernity). This did not stop its leader being shot dead! Significantly the regime failed to condemn the murder. Soon after a militant of the Workers Party (Trotskyists) was shot dead. The police refused to accompany an ambulance to the scene of the murder. A journalist wrote about a fundamentalist who had been acquitted after planting a bomb. He was arrested for insulting the judge! It is difficult to tell whether a murder is carried out by the fundamentalists, by the secret services who have infiltrated and are manipulating fundamentalist groups, or by Army and secret police units masquerading as fundamentalists!

The fundamentalist terror has been used as a smokescreen and a pretext for the State to remove all obstacles to the austerity programme of the IMF. Many militants of the Workers Party have been imprisoned. At the same time the regime enlisted the help of the Algerian democrats like Ettahaddin, the Front des Forces Socialistes led by Ait Hamed, the Movement for Democracy led by Ben Bella, and the Assembly for Culture and Democracy of Dr. Said Sadi, to condone the repression.

For a long time, fundamentalism has been used by the Western powers as a weapon against the Soviet bloc. The French President Giscard admitted this in 1980. Sayed Kobt, one of the leaders of the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt, spent three years in the USA from 1949-51. At this period he was used to destabilise the Arab nationalist regime of Nasser, in the Soviet orbit and as a source of inspiration to Arab and African nationalists. In 1967 he was executed for plotting with the American secret services. In 1980 an Egyptian fundamentalist was appointed official religious leader by the Algerian State. He was the only person apart from the President to address the nation on TV.

Another country plays a key role in the development of the FIS — Saudi Arabia. Through its World Islamic League it set up a religious school in Algeria. One of the FIS leaders, Ali Bonhadj, was one of its pupils. Abassi Madani, another FIS leader, attended the school for a period. The head of the school, Abu Bakr, was consulted on the creation of the FIS, and it was thanks to him that it received Saudi financing. After the Gulf War when Saudi Arabia and the FIS parted ways, the Saudi Minister of Defence declared that his country "had generously aided these ingrates". The Saudi Red Cross helped Algerian fundamentalists enter Afghanistan, where they gained valuable military training during the war against the Soviets and their client regime.

Above: Wall slogans call for an Islamic state.

Cut off by its sugar-daddy, FIS turned towards Iran. Saudi Arabia now switched sides, giving support to the military regime.

The USA also initially supported the FIS regime against the regime. Part of the US administration still does so, but on the other hand many American businesses are prospering in Algeria because of the new petrol agreements.

On top of this, the Republicans now control Congress. Their views are reflected in a report by one Perlmutter, close to Bush, who stated: "It would be preferable for the Americans to support an Algerian policy of eradication rather than accept a victory of the FIS or the Armed Islamic Groups". For their part, the French, who still see Algeria as a sphere of influence, support the military.

Boumedienne's military dictatorship decided to go ahead with an Arabisation of the country. Algerian Arabic was considered as a dialect and Middle Eastern Arabic was seen as true Arabic and promoted in the schools. It was during this period from 1965 until well into the '70s that large numbers of fundamentalist preachers were brought in to teach this 'real' Arabic, from Egypt and Syria. It was also in this period that many new mosques were constructed with Saudi money. The fundamentalist clerics pushed this Arabisation in the schools, mosques and universities. Islam has always been used by the regime to make the masses swallow the worst social and economic medicine.

The Berbers

The first meeting of the Algerian region with Islam was a very bloody one. Islam was introduced into North Africa by a process of colonisation, where Arab soldiers massacred and pillaged the towns and villages that refused to surrender. They met fierce resistance in the Algerian region from the local population, a non-Arab people, the Berbers. Hundreds of Berber revolts took place against the central Arab power that was established, but finally many Berbers began to collaborate and to accept Islam and the Arab language.

Many Berbers took part in the nationalist movement against the French. Ali Yehya, a young Kabyle (one of the groups making up the Berber people) denounced the myth of an Arab Moslem Algeria within nationalist circles organised in France. He gained a majority in Paris. What followed was a series of expulsions, fist-fights, knife-attacks and attempted assassinations, when those in favour of an Arabo-Islamic orientation of the movement, under Ben Bella, won the upper hand. The FLN won the war against the French using religion and the myth of a united Arab nation.

As soon as the new nation-State was installed with the victory of the FLN, assaults began on the Berber language and culture, with a series of humiliations for all the Berbers — the Kabyles, Chaouias, Mozabites and Touaregs.

This resulted in a mass uprising in Kabylie in 1980 against the oppression of Berber language and culture. This uprising also advanced ideas about women's emancipation and it is no surprise that today the movement for women's liberation in Algeria is the most advanced and combative in the 'Arab' world. The Army was sent in resulting in 700 wounded and more than 500 arrests.

Failure

The radicalisation of the Islamic groups in Algeria is a direct result of the failure of Algerian nationalism in all its forms — whether reformist, 'revolutionary', or militarist. The 'revolutionary' currents have been predominantly Berber, often calling themselves Marxist, and concealing this because of the nature of the period. Many came from a modest rural background, keeping their links with the Kabyle countryside and the working class immigrants in France.

The fundamentalist reaction was in part a response to the Berber revolt, and the regime initially hoped to use the fundamentalists to tame this resistance, as the standard-bearer of Arabisation. Because they are non-Arabs, they are a main target of the Arabising FIS.

In response, many armed defence groups have set up in Berber areas. Unfortunately, the State has made efforts to integrate this grass-roots resistance into their own war against the FIS.

Despite the civil war, strikes have taken place in the docks, and the gas and oil industries in response to the measures of the regime. This has decided that the repayment of the debt was a priority over the feeding of the people. For example, the prices of coffee and sugar have gone up 50%, and it has been decided that only limited quantities of certain foodstuffs should be on sale. For example, only 800,000 tonnes of milk compared to 1m in 1991, at a time when the population is increasing.

Other products regarded as superfluous or of secondary importance have been banned from import, like mushrooms and meat. Also banned from import have been textiles, clothing and shoes.

Favour

It pleases the Western powers, in particular France, that the FIS are in favour of a market economy, that they are against emigration to the decadent West, for the return of Algerians living and working in Europe, and for a strong rule over the masses. This was the tactics of the Socialist administrations in France, but as noted earlier, the Gaullists now in power favour the military. Whether the FIS or the Army, the Western powers want a strong regime that will meet their demands that emigration from Algeria, and through Algeria from black Africa, be limited, and that the masses be controlled.

As revolutionaries, we see the only way out coming from independent initiatives within the working class, and within the womens' organisations and Berber defence squads, that can break with both the military and the fundamentalists. Knowing the strong traditions of revolt and, despite everything, strong libertarian impulses amongst the Algerian masses, we do not think this is completely impossible.

Anarchism in Arabic

Lebanese libertarians Al Badil al taharouri have translated *Anarchism* by Daniel Guerin into Arabic. Despite some flaws, this is still considered by many to be the best introduction to class struggle anarchism, written by someone actually active in the movement for a change, the late Daniel Guerin, veteran libertarian communist. For more details, write to Al Badil al taharouri via BP 177, 75967 Paris cedex 20, France.

ROMANIA

The fall of Ceaucescu led to his replacement by another bunch of bureaucrats who had been part of his regime!

As elsewhere, the regime is attempting to impose austerity programmes on the working class and peasants. Simmering discontent has led to a general strike on April 11th of this year. The first to strike were health workers in Cluj Napoca, a town in Transylvania. This had been preceded by a strike of 5,000 Tube workers in the capital Bucharest on 3rd April. The government was forced to concede pay rises and improvement of working conditions.

The Cluj strike was followed by a telecommunications workers' strike in Hargluda and Ploesti, where there was also a large demonstration of petrol workers. There were major demos in towns throughout Romania — in Arad, Ploesti, Birlad, Vaslui, Constanta, Cluj, Iasi, Buzau, Calarasi, Timisoara. Out on strike were petrochemical, metal, health, car and telecom workers. A demonstration of 70,000 assembled outside Victoria Palace, the home of the Romanian parliament. This is massive by Romanian standards. Slogans chanted were "Down with Iliescu!" (President of Romania) and "Down with Vacaroiu!" (the Prime Minister), "Who will Execute the Government?", and "Thieves!"

The goverment were forced to make concessions through the mediation of the trade union bloc CNSLR (National Confederation of Free Unions) led by Pavel Todoran. Despite the orchestrated action by the unions, a number of actions, including strikes and blockades of railway lines were spontaneous.

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!* you might be interested in these publications:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole Cl, c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of group of same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

The class struggle in prisons

An interview with Graham at Swalesdale

ACF: *What forms of resistance take place in prison?*
G: There isn't much these days. The great days of the '70s, '80s and early '90s are well gone. After Manchester, people saw the results. We all resist in our own little way, using the system for what we can, getting what we can out of it. But major resistance, no.

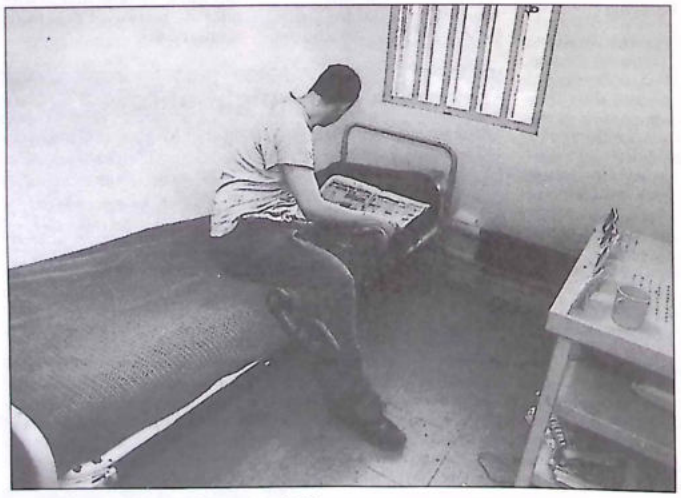
But resistance is good because I am looking at the results right now. In my cell there's a toilet and a sink and while it's not very nice living in a toilet, it's a lot better than having to shit in a tin bucket; and having washing facilities with hot and cold water is a lot better than having to wash with just a jug of cold water... and the reason I've got those facilities is because the lads who rioted at Manchester put their liberty on the line for me... and every other prisoner, which we should never forget.

For resistance to be good it's got to be something big like that, where there's a lot of publicity behind it and there are enquiries and so on. But petty resistance, arguing with the screws and refusing to go to work etc, get you nowhere. We've got a whole wing here that's extended into a punishment block, but because the authorities can only give up to 14 days punishment, the governor will say, "OK, I'm not giving any punishment for this offence but you'll be transferred to 'A' wing." There you are locked up 23 and a half hours a day and you get nothing: no association or television. And in some of the cells where former prisoners have smashed the toilet and the sink, then they are taken out completely and we are back to the old prison piss pot. And this is a brand new prison, it's only been open five or six years.

So, resistance, there's no such thing because there's no class solidarity in prison these days. Drugs are the rulers in prison on the one hand, and parole is on the other. If you're not worried about where your next fix is coming from, if you're not a heroin addict, then you're worried about what the screws are going to put down on their report. We now have a system of SI reports. These are confidential (to the screws) notes that are put into your record. Often, if they want to be funny, they put down what they want about you. Everything you do is noted and written about. To get away with anything is almost impossible.

I thought I'd got away with it in Nottingham prison when I refused to work in the tailors' shop. They put me in the punishment block where I stayed for three months. They came down and tried to have a little go at me with the result that I smashed up the cell and it cost them £18,000 to put it right. The immediate result was to put me back on my original wing and to say I could have any job I wanted, "just keep quiet". I thought I'd won. I should have known a lot better because the result of that is that I'm sent to Swalesdale. This is the class of prison I was sent to when I started eight years ago, so I've really gone back to my bird. It hasn't deterred me, I'm still the same person I was, but it just makes me a bit more wary. I think before I act now and make every action effective rather than just for a laugh. There's no laughs in this game, especially when doing a life sentence.

So resistance is out because there's no class solidarity. None whatsoever. You might get two or three people who will stick together but you won't get the whole prison going on sit-down strikes anymore. That's all finished; so there is no resistance, not as such.



React

ACF: *How do the authorities and prisoners react to stories of prison rebellion?*
G: Usually the screws just go out and sulk and the lads sit by the television cheering it on. I don't think it adds to or incites riots in any other prisons because it is very much 'dog eat dog', I'm afraid, in prisons today. The prevailing view is that if my comrade is getting the shit kicked out of him in some other prison, "what's it to me?". I'm alright here with my feet up and a fag in my hand. That seems to be the attitude. The only time when prison riots go from prison to prison is when they are prison officer-instigated. Prison officers may have a grouse with the Home Office and work to rule etc, and they make it quite plain that if we smash the place up a bit and help them, then our visits go ahead and so on. So, every prison tends to go up at the same time. The situation is coordinated by the Prison Officers Association. Sometimes rebellions are isolated. There's a gaol up North which got destroyed as bad as at Manchester. That was prison officer-instigated but the POA refused to back them on the matter, so they just made as much trouble in that gaol until it went up. So, a riot in one gaol being reported in the media does not affect the next gaol to the extent that the gaol will 'go up'. In fact, it relieves the tension. If you are walking around bored and fed up and a prison goes up when you are all sitting round watching television, jeering and shouting, it relieves a lot of the tension! Then you go out and take the mickey out of the screws. I think the screws are a bit relieved when riots occur in other gaols because it lessens the chances of there being one in their own particular gaol.

ACF: *Could you describe the hierarchies that exist in prisons?*
G: The top dogs are the heroin sellers, the purveyors of death. I hate them as much as I hate any other oppressor. But, they have the money, they have the heroin and everybody wants it and they're looked up to. Heroin is now boss and it's filthy.

There isn't much of a hierarchy, except that a decent thief is considered OK and a sex offender or a grass is at the bottom of the shit-heap.

ACF: *Could you say something about prisons and costs?*
G: Well, what you've got to remember is the aim of this government is privatisation, to sell off the gaols. So, the more prisoners you have got and the longer you have them in, the more viable a proposition the gaols are. In this prison, for instance, one of the aims is to keep the costs down because this prison is virtually unmanageable in the way it's built. It's one that the government has got to get shot of as quickly as possible.

Somewhere like Nottingham, which is a nice little prison and holds only 200 prisoners, is being extended so as to hold 500. It has to hold at least that number before the private sector is interested. It's all geared up to the private sector and career management. It's got very little to do with prisons as such. Prisons are such a difficult issue that the government wants to put them on somebody else's back, ie the private sector.

ACF: *To what extent are basic human dignities allowed or denied?*
G: I think I should tell you about visitors being strip searched at the gate. In some prisons this is handled with a bit more dignity than others but I don't think it can be handled with dignity as far as prisoners are concerned, eg a prison officer looking at his wife's intimate parts.

As far as prisoners are concerned, we are locked up in our cells overnight. If I want to use the toilet I can. Unlike the old-fashioned spy holes in the cell door, we now have slits which are about a foot long and three inches wide, from which the screw can see the whole cell. We are not allowed to cover this up. So if you want to go to the toilet, I have to do so in full view of a prison officer. And don't forget, there are a lot of female staff here.

Also, what we used to do is wedge the door shut so that it can't be opened. In some prisons, with more relaxed regimes, they will allow this if you explain that you are on the toilet. Here it is an offence, so any officer can see what you're doing. During the day, anyone, prison officers, prisoners, welfare officers etc, can walk in at any time. There is, in short, no dignity whatsoever in prison. In this prison, officers regularly enter the cell, order you to strip and then search your cell. Prison officers want to look at your private parts, they say they want to see what you are hiding in your Y-fronts! It's very hard for some people to take if they're shy.

Assault

The reason for stripping people is done under Home Office Psychiatry Team recommendations. According to them, if an inmate is forced to display his genitalia to a prison officer, he is not so likely to assault him. He is more likely to be made to feel small and kept in his place. It's just psychological control. They're not interested in what you are hiding.

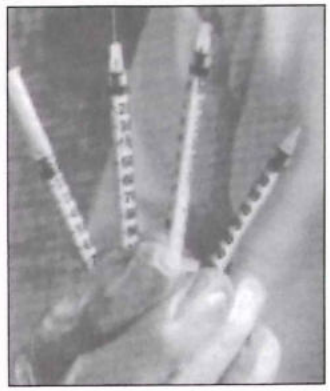
A person can only be internally searched by a medical officer. A person who is suspected of having swallowed drugs given during a visit is taken to a room with no facilities whatsoever and the contents of his crap are examined. I think that is a little undignified — of course real drug smugglers don't bring in the stuff like that. It's part of the silly little games that the authorities want to play with you.

When you get sentenced to prison the state owns you. You are no longer a human being. At the moment we are regarded as commodities. When the private sector gets hold of us, we will revert to being slaves. At the moment we are treated like farm animals, so long as we do as we are told and are where we're supposed to be, that's all they are concerned with.

ACF: *Could you tell us about prisoners' political awareness?*
G: Prisoners are a reactionary bunch since survival is the key in here. There is scope for political development; there are people who are willing to learn why their lives are buggered up. The prisoners who are into politics are mainly in the top security prisons, eg the provos. Even then such prisoners are not that interested in politics in gaol since survival is the key question. We tend to see it as two different worlds: prison and out there. And when people out there start lecturing us, telling us how to live, we say, "You come and live in here, you bugger and you try it!"

Reactionary

Prisoners can only be reactionary. Management over the years, over to the fine tuning stage now, have so perfected their control that anybody trying to educate people politically is just moved from prison to prison. The maximum any long-termer stays in one prison is two years. The authorities don't want you to get permanent friends; they don't want you to start trusting people and they don't want you to start fighting back most of all. There isn't much scope for political development except for people who were politically aware before they went into prison, like myself. But you're very much on your own and you have to do it by using the govenment's weapon, ie paperwork, not by violence or any other means. Violence is no use in prison. The only time that violence is any good is when you can get away with it. You can't get away with it easily in here as you are completely trapped. There is nowhere to run, in here you have to use intelligence, not force. Not many people can do this as prisons are substitutes for our closed-down mental hospitals.



ACF: *Are you forced to do any work?*
G: *Yes, comrade, we are forced to do work and the work is onerous. The work in most prisons involves textiles, working at sewing machines and light assembly work. if you aren't involved in something else then that is what you do. The work is repetitive and only one operation is done by one man throughout the shift. It is soul-destroying and the pay is pretty low. Prisoners aren't allowed to practise their skills. Engineers, for example, would be made to work in the kitchen because you are not allowed to know more than your instructor.*

Here are some pay rates. Light textiles pays £5.60 a week, education £5.10, light assembly work £5.60, gardening £5.10, orderlies £6.10, kitchens £8.10, unemployed nil and retired £4. Given the costs here in prison, it is impossible to live on a prison wage. Everybody has a fiddle.

ACF: *Could you tell us something about the internal prison economies?*
G: The black economy is based largely on heroin today. People can bring in a small supply of heroin easily and it is taken to the cell and mixed with other substances to stretch it out a bit and then sell it. One prisoner told me that a bag of heroin mixture sold here for £10 has about 50p worth of heroin in it. The big money-maker today is heroin, whilst be-

fore it used to be tobacco. Cannabis is very extensive too.

Heroin

Also, there is the buying and selling of clothing. Somebody with a good supply of money from selling heroin will buy nicer clothes than others have got. Some of the younger lads hooked on heroin will sell their backsides which again is part of the unofficial economy. The amount of money to be made out of heroin means that it is virtually uncontrollable.

ACF: *Would you say something about your own situation?*
G: My own situation was that I was called to assist a young girl (aged 14) who was being beaten up and her clothes were being removed by a large 23-year-old man. He was wielding a pick-axe handle and in fact he whacked her over the head with this because she was black. When I went to ask him to stop so I could take the girl to hospital, he attacked me. Rather than let him hit me I took out my knife and stabbed him in the nose, upon which he collapsed. I didn't kill him, it only went into his nose (extremely painful, I should think). He died of a sub-achranoid haemmhorage which is near enough by natural causes. And I am still appealing after eight years.

ACF: *Any final points?*
G: It doesn't pay to stop crime; it pays very well for the people who run the penal system, judges and so forth. The cannon fodder are not only the prisoners but also the prison officers. If prisons were empty and there was no more crime, there would be a lot of people out of work and with privatisation going through, it would be rendered a dead duck. This is a vast industry. Each governor gets a good bonus, about £20,000, if there are no escapees from his prison, and the top dog gets even more than this.

What is important is that you people involved in the revolutionary movement keep it alive. Your business is propaganda or whatever, but it's important that people like me in here can keep up with current affairs by reading your magazines. When I've read them I can leave them on the landing or pass them on so they are read and people can see an alternative, a way out. A great deal of prisoners in here are not criminals but social inadequates. But it should be realised that they have no opportunity to be anything else. Everyone is a human being and can be educated and pointed in the right direction.

The above is an edited version of an hour and a half taped interview, which contains much more information than space allows here. If you would like a copy of the full, often humorous and insightful version on audio tape, please write to Organise!, *enclosing a cheque for £5. All proceeds go to the prisoner.*

Mumia Abu-Jamal

BY THE TIME you read this, Mumia Abu-Jamal may be dead, executed by the State of Pennsylvania.

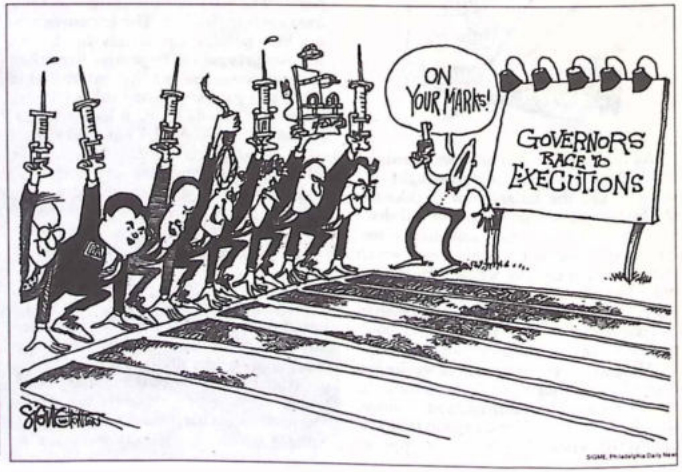
Mumia Abu-Jamal started political activity at the age of 13, in 1967, when as a school student he protested against the 'education' in Philadelphia's segregated schools. Frank Rizzo, Philadelphia's police boss, led busloads of baton-wielding cops to smash the protest, arresting 57 and seriously injuring 22. Mumia was among those arrested. He was again arrested in 1968 when he took part in a demonstration against a presidential rally by the champion of segregation, George Wallace. He was yet again arrested the following year when he was among those rounded up in HQ (by now the 15-year-old was the Panthers' Minister of Information). Later on in the year, he was the first speaker at an event to commemorate the murder of Panther leader Fred Hampton in Chicago by the police and FBI. In the '70s he broadcast as the "voice of the voiceless" over local radio.

Above: Mumia Abu-Jamal.

All of this attracted the attention of Rizzo. When Mumia spoke against the murder of 11 MOVE members, he went to the head of the list of those Rizzo wanted put out of action. Rizzo had orchestrated the siege of the MOVE commune house which culminated in the death of 11 members. The MOVE was a group of black activists who were moving towards anarchist positions. Rizzo personally warned Mumia that: "...one day, and I hope it's in my career, that you're going to be held responsible and accountable for what you do".

The opportunity came in 1981 when Mumia was shot in the chest by a cop, who was found dead. He was sent to Death Row. Whilst critically wounded, he was beaten and kicked. At the trial he was denied the right to represent himself or have an attorney of his choice. Despite four witnesses stating that someone else had shot the cop and fled, Mumia was sentenced to death, his political past being used as evidence that 'proved' he was a 'cop-killer'.

In prison he has been denied the use of a typewriter or much library time, yet continues to write articles and essays on a wide range of political issues. The Philadelphia police managed to get 12 broadcasts by Mumia cancelled on National Public Radio, but failed to stop the publication of his book *Live from Death Row*. (Despite the cops hiring a plane that flew over the publishing house flying a banner that attacked the decision to print).



Death

The election of Tom Ridge as Governor of Pennsylvania in 1994 was to be a turning point in Mumia's long suffering. Ridge is a supporter of capital punishment. He has already signed five death warrants and has now signed one for Mumia. Unless the level of protest can be raised, he risks being murdered by the State in August.

In Britain the campaign against the judicial murder has been taken over by the horrific Stalinists of the Spartacist League, who are invested in the Partisan Defence Committee, along with Trotskyist grouplets like the Revolutionary Internationalist League. The pickets of the US Embassy have been used as an opportunity by the Spartacists to chant their robotic Party-building slogans. Nevertheless, it is up to everyone to attend the pickets and marginalise them. We urge all libertarian revolutionaries to attend the picket and try to get as many as possible at them.

Similarly you can show the video *From Death Row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal* that the Partisan Defence committee have, by phoning 0171-485 1396. Say you're interested in the Mumia case and ignore any Spartacist recruiting.

You can get the book *Still Black, Still Strong (Survivors of the War Against Black Revolutionaries)* from Semiotext(e) with info on the FBI campaign against the Panthers, MOVE, etc. £5 plus 50p P&P from Counter Productions, PO Box 556 London SE5 ORL.

Prisoners' support:

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS

Prisoners' Justice Day: August 10th

IN 1975, prisoner Eddie Nalon was left to die after a suicide attempt. The panic button in his cell was disconnected. Fellow prisoners at Millhaven Maximum Secure Unit in Canada went on hunger strike in protest.

So was born Prisoners' Justice Day. it is a day of protest when people remember those who have died in prison, whether from the routine brutality of prison life, murder by screws or other prisoners, or suicide.

It spread throughout Canada and is now an International Day of Action, involving both prisoners and their supporters. Actions have included work-strikes, demonstrations and hunger strikes. It is also about building solidarity between prisoners and increasing support from the outside.

In Britain, the Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) began supporting Prisoners' Justice Day in 1992 and since then an increasing number of demonstrations and events have taken place here. This year it will hopefully be bigger still and everyone who can support it should do so. Various actions and demonstrations will take place around the country; the more that are organised, the better!

For more details contact: London ABC, 121 Railton Road, London SE24 OLR. Tel: 0171-274 6655.

John Perotti

John Perotti, the anarchist prison activist, has again been set up by prison authorities and placed in an isolation control unit. His work for fellow prisoners has long made him a target of the prison authorities. He was intending to start a hunger strike from May 1st, 1995, unless he was released from isolation and transferred to a prison in a different state.

John is asking that letters be sent protesting at his treatment and demanding that Director Wilkinson transfer him out of the state immediately.

Send to: Governor Voinavitch, Vern R. Center, 77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215, USA.
*Letters of support to: John Perotti, SOCF *167712, PO Box 45699, Lucasville, Ohio 45699, USA.*

David Bowen

David Bowen was a remand prisoner at the time of the Strangeways prison uprising in April 1990, awaiting trial for stealing a pair of curtains. In December 1992 he escaped from custody while being transported from Hull prison to Manchester Crown Court. He was found guilty in his absence of conspiring to commit grevious bodily harm on prison officers (which he denies) and sentenced to nine years. He subsequently received a further three years on a trumped-up charge of perverting the cause of justice and has recently lost an appeal.

He is now being tried for escaping from lawful custody, for which he is pleading not guilty. He is presenting a defence of duress, citing his treatment in prison, including verbal and physical abuse from screws at Hull prison.

David and the 22 others convicted at the Strangeways show trials are scapegoats for the prison system and a warning to other prisoners not to make trouble. They deserve our support.

Send messages to: David Bowen, DA0146, HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester LE2 7AJ.

ACE
Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Anarchism — As We See It. A new, revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.
Manifesto of Libertarian Communism? by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary theory and practice. 60p & SAE. 6th printing now available.
Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a 'vanguard' party as counter- revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.
Basic Bakunin. A revised edition of our very popular pamphlet on one of the founders of revolutionary anarchism.
The Myth of Labour's Socialism. Just a few copies of this one left, so get 'em soon! Describes the nature of a Party set to administer British capitalism again.
COMING SOON! *Manifesto for the Millenium* and a pamphlet on ecology.
Aspects of Anarchism. Collected articles from the pages of *Organise!* on the fundamentals of anarchist communism. 30p & SAE.
Making Progress is out of print at the moment.

WHOSE HERITAGE?

THE LAST FEW years have seen the growth of the so-called 'heritage industry'. It found a fertile soil in the social climate of late '80s Britain and has continued to flourish as the commercial maNagement of our social life expands still further. The heritage industry is not just a commercial phenomenon, though. It is part and parcel of attempts by the British ruling class to use a visible past to construct an image of enduring traditions, to promote national unity and to hide class conflict.

The roots of this political presentation of the past can be traced to the last century. In the late 19th century, capitalism and the established institutions of the Crown, the Church and the aristocracy were perceived to be threatened by working class militancy and republican and revolutionary ideas. Sections of the ruling class had a broad cultural response to these pressures to accompany the usual legal sanctions and police violence. This included the invention of grand royal ceremonies, the promotion of patriotic and imperial themes within ceremonial music and the architectural remodelling of London in keeping with its status as imperial capital. The overall intention was to emphasise the traditional, 'enduring' aspects of the governing institutions in order to overawe, enthuse or intimidate the mass of people.

One facet of this cultural offensive was the Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1882, proposed by Sir John Lubbock to "preserve from demolition or decay works of ancient times that are tangible evidences of the gradual establishment of the great institutions". Under the Act a Royal Commission was formed and an Inspector of Ancient Monuments was appointed. The first Inspector, Lubbock's father-in-law, General Pitt-Rivers, elaborated on his role: "The law that Nature makes no jumps can be taught... in such a way at least to make men cautious how they listen to scatter-brained revolutionary suggestions".

Power and Prestige

The primary focus of the Act was the preservation and presentation of castles, mansions, abbeys and churches — all visible expressions of the power and prestige of the Church and the aristocracy. The National Trust, formed in 1895 to encourage the appreciation of 'national treasures' among the lower classes, developed a similar bias towards celebrating the ill-gotten gains of the British ruling elite, their 'gangsters' castles' built on slavery and oppression abroad and exploitation at home. The kind of national unity and sense of natural order that such displays were intended to underline required amnesia or ignorance of past exploitation on the part of those it was supposed to impress. Even today we are invited to marvel at the good taste and sophistication of a class that continues to prosper at our expense (heard the one about Lord Muck who left his stately pile to the National Trust so that he could still live on site while NT members pick up the tab?).

The manipulation of the past has continued to be a preoccupation of the ruling class. In 1975, as if to echo the anxieties of a hundred years before, a Department of the Environment document, *What is our Heritage?*, stated that "heritage would give a feeling of continuity and a sense of security to face the difficult years ahead". This was published at a time when the confidence of the capitalist class had been severely shaken by a tide of working class militancy. The DoE document shows that the idea of a 'national heritage' was being tied explicitly to the promotion of social cohesion and stability. Meanwhile, a new counter-offensive against the working class was in preparation.

The policies pursued by the Thatcher administration were to a great extent the continuation of the austerity policies pursued by the previous Labour government. The social and political climate of 'Thatcher's Britain' proved to be the catalyst for the growth of the heritage industry. It would be wrong to say that there was some grand design behind this development, especially as there were certain contributory factors that might not have been predicted, but the 1975 DoE document does look strangely phrophetic.

One contributory factor was the leisure industry. Increasingly, capitalism has required us to make profits for capitalists in our free time as well as in our work time. US capitalism pioneered such developments with covered shopping complexes, private spaces designed to attract consumers at the weekend. The packaging and selling of less tangible commodities via 'theme parks' was to follow. Wild spaces became national parks, devoted to a more subtle but nonetheless real encroachment on self-generated activity. The commodification of the past would be just one more step in this process, helped along by government policy in the eighties.

Below: Stoke Newington pumping station is to be turned into a climbing centre.

State-manipulated social disintegration and a sense of loss and disorientation on the part of many people reinforced an attachment to things old. There was a vein of nostalgia here to be tapped by the leisure industry. As fast as the familiar anchors of everyday life were removed they reappeared as 'heritage'. Look at how recession-hit factories and warehouses have been turned into leisure attractions, eg the soon-to-open Castle climbing and sports centre in North London (previously a pumping station), the turning of slate mines in North Wales into tourist attractions and the various developments in Docklands. Changes in employment patterns accelerated this process as the government promoted a 'candy floss economy' based on the selling of services from which the leisure and tourist industry were ideally suited. 'Heritage' was to remain a major theme for the ruling class, but with a more commercial bias in keeping with Thatcherite ideology. With this 'market-led' approach there was less emphasis on the pomp and circumstance of the aristocratic past in favour of a broader, more populist emphasis, but with a restricted set of interpretations in tune with a *Daily Mail* view of the world.

Natural Order

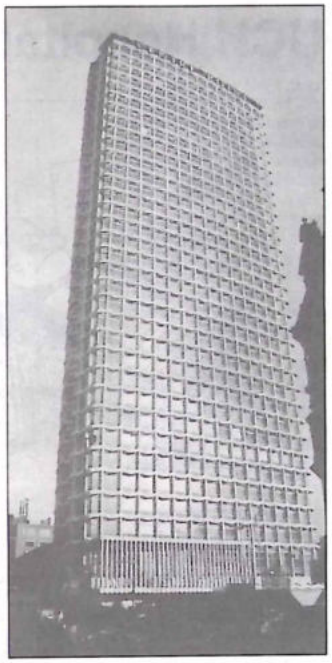
Museums and heritage parks appeared that sought to portray the everyday life of working people in the past. At first sight it would seem to be an acknowledgement of working class history, but at a deeper level it is about representing working class people as fulfilling pre-set roles and subordinates in the 'natural order'. It is about presenting a communal or national past with an absence of class conflict. Such critical distortions of working class experience can be found at the Beamish open-air museum, which aims to show Geordie life at the turn of the century, complete with trams, pubs and an apparently harmonious community in period costume. It's an all-singing, all-dancing Hovis advert with no hint of the grinding poverty or bad working conditions. The Ironbridge Gorge museum also glosses over the harsh realities of the Industrial Revolution with its emphasis on the 'nuts and bolts' of technological achievement and not the misery that existed. HM government has nominated Ironbridge as a 'World Heritage' site.

A sinister twist to the heritage saga is the proliferation of mining museums around closed-down collieries. You can almost see the grin on the face of government ministers as their mortal enemies, the miners, become museum pieces. Through the heritage process it is as if we are being told that the working class is no longer making history, it is history. It tallies with the oft-repeated idea that the class struggle is somehow a thing of the past. One slate mine museum in North Wales even sells a pamphlet which tries to argue that a major strike in the mine's history was one of the main reasons that the mine is no longer thriving.

The promotion of nationalist ideology through heritage is just another step in reinforcing a perception of social cohesion and class peace that our rulers want us to share. The *Mary Rose*, Henry VIII's ill-fated tub, was dredged out of the Solent to the accompaniment of post-Falklands hysteria. The nationalist overtones of such icons as HMS Victory are inescapable, while the old Royal Naval College at Greenwich will be declared a World Heritage Site in time for the Millennium celebrations to be held there. Added to that we've had the nationalistic jamborees around the D-Day and VE Day anniversaries.

We've seen the visible past used to construct an image of enduring traditions in stained glass and stone, to promote patriotism, national unity and class peace. It is an idealised past that in recent years has been turned into a saleable commodity, diluting to an extent the message that sections of the ruling class might want to get across, but still affirming the values of wage slavery, hierarchy and the market. It also reinforces a view of culture as 'English', encouraging the white working class to identify with their white rulers and to see ethnic groups (the Irish, Afro-Caribbean, Asian etc) as being outside this common cultural 'heritage'.

What are the possible working class and revolutionary responses to this cultural offensive? Because heritage is such a diffuse quality there are a number of different areas susceptible to conflict and subversion. On a practical level class struggle can flare up at any time and in any place. For instance, while 'living museums' celebrate an industrial or rural past there is an industrial present of job insecurity, shit wages and conditions within the heritage industry as much as anywhere. So the potential for conflict is there. There is also a conflict in the interpretation and use of the past, a conflict which this article is intended to encourage. The past is important in gaining a sense of working class tradition, not to discourage struggle but to inspire us in the present. There is also the 'quality' of historic things and places, which are not 'precious', having as much potential for use today as any day. Look at what's been done in the 'old town' districts of many British cities where streets have been cobbled and 'Victorianised' with railings and bollards. Plenty of ammunition there for present-day conflict!



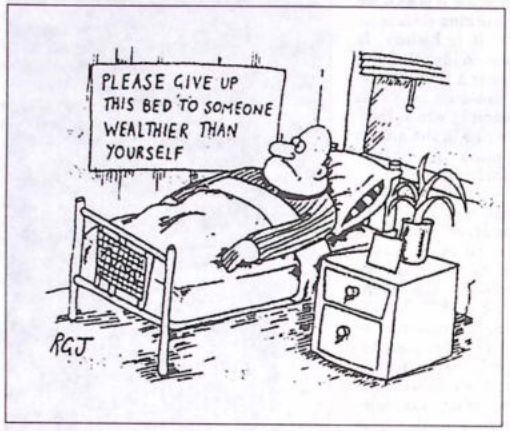
Above: Centrepoint, ruling class phallic symbol on Heritage list.

As for the aristocracy, it has been said that they have been largely insulated from everyday class conflict both because of their social distance and the spatial distance imposed by their deer parks and grounds. Historically it has been their agents further down the social scale who have got it in the neck from a vengeful poor, eg the bailiffs, gamekeepers etc. In view of their continuing influence and the important place the architectural expressions of their wealth have in the heritage spectacle, then the purely accidental fires at Uppark House and Windsor Castle provide food for thought. The monumental architecture of the rich and powerful has often been a target of attack. During the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico last year, peasant rebels undertook the demolition of town halls using sledgehammers. As they said: "Our thinking is that we have to build socialism".

These are just preliminary thoughts on the subject of heritage and the possibilities for its subversion. No doubt others can add ideas and observations of their own.

Editors' note: *This article was not written by an ACF member and the ideas contained in it do not represent the ACF. Though we would generally agree with the main views expressed in the article, there may be disagreement as to what should actually be done.*

UCH Hospital strike



Occupational Therapy: The incomplete story of the University College Hospital strikes and occupations of 1992/93/94

THIS PAMPHLET was put together by a number of participants in the struggle against closures at the University College hospital in central London.

It consists of an account of the fight against the management and union tactics (and the manipulative antics of the Socialist Workers Party) by the UCH Community Action Committee, plus an analysis of the continuing assault upon the NHS, and by extension upon the entire working class, on the part of the State.

Direct action

From the outset, the Action Committee was organised autonomously of the union involved (UNISON) and encouraged a direct action approach, utilising occupations, demos and strategies to extend the struggle.

This inevitably meant a conflict with the 'official' structures. It also brought them up against that self-proclaimed vanguard of the working class, the SWP, whose hacks, prisoners of their leftist ideology, were committed to keeping the struggle within the confines of trade union practice; not surprising, when these Trots often actually constitute the lower levels of the union apparatus itself!

It is a clearly-written pamphlet which rejects the triumphalism of the SWP and doesn't pretend that the struggle ended in a workers' victory.

It didn't, though not for want of trying. The events around the UCH occupations do, however, supply revolutionaries with valuable experience and lessons to learn from.

Resurgence

We may be looking at a potential resurgence of struggle and resistance in the coming months as workers in the health service reject the Government's pay offer.

If those in struggle can unify and extend themselves, taking on the nature of a counter-offensive against austerity and cut-backs across the board (though not in the boardroom!), then we may yet see a working class victory for a change. We need one!

We strongly recommend that comrades read this pamphlet.

Copies are a mere £1 each, including postage and packaging and are available from: News for Everyone, Box 14, 138 Kingsland High St, London E8 2NS.

NEW PAMPHLET!

London ACF are proud to announce the appearance of a new pamphlet in the Stormy Petrel series: Malatesta's *Anarchism and Violence*. Complete with a new introduction by an ACF member, this important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society.

Copies of this pamphlet, and the previous Stormy Petrel, *The Friends of Durruti*, are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 at 75p including postage.

The Friends of Durruti were a much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. Included are an historical introduction from an ACF member and two political statements from the Friends themselves.

EE Cummings

The Enormous Room by EE Cummings. £8.95, Liveright.

Treason

IN 1917 THE AMERICAN writer and poet EE Cummings, whilst serving in France as an ambulance driver, was arrested for treason and imprisoned in an internment camp for three months.

This happened because of his correspondence with the American anarchist Emma Goldman.

He published his account of his experiences five years later in this book.

Warmly human in its appreciation of the prisoners and scathingly contemptuous of the guards, it is a highlight of 20th century literature, suffused with an anarchist spirit. Who can forget Jean Le Negre, the pimp who impersonated an officer, Emile the Bum, the Schoolmaster, Monsieur Auguste, and a host of others like The Bear.

"A big shaggy person... an anarchist, wrote practically all the time...; wrote letters (which he read aloud with evident satisfaction to himself), addressing 'my confreres', stimulating them to even greater efforts, telling them that the time was ripe, that the world consisted of brothers etc... He had, I think, —

Above: EE Cummings.

Vive La Liberté tattooed in blue and green on his big, hairy chest. A fine bear. A bear whom no twitchings or muzzle nor any starvation nor yet any beating could ever teach to dance...".

Drawings

This new edition has previously-suppressed material and includes the drawings Cummings made in the concentration camp.

Open Eye

Open Eye, Issue 3

THE LATEST issue of this investigative magazine carries articles on David Icke and his links with the far right, the operations of MI5 and Special Branch, and loads more. Available from radical bookshops or from BM Open Eye, London WC1 3XX, enclosing £1.70.

Kate Sharpley

KATE SHARPLEY Library Publications — The Kate Sharpley Library, named after an anarchist militant at the start of this century, has produced a number of pamphlets.

Of particular interest will be *Personal Recollections of the Anarchist Past* by George Cores, and *Memoirs of a Makhnovist Partisan*. Available from KSL, BM Hurricane, London WC1 3XX for £1 each post free. Send for a full catalogue at £2.

WHAT DRIVEL! I refer to your 'Article Writer Replies' to a letter from JW, East Ham in number 38. Some remarks:

1. It seems your nameless writer wishes to confirm the working class in apathy and disillusion by branding all sex workers as 'victims' of society (so (s)he can enlighten us and lead the powerless to a better life, perhaps?). I'm sorry to inform you that many of us work in the sex industry because the pay is better than most of the other jobs we might be forced to do. Credit us at least with the intelligence to be able to choose where, when and how we sell our bodies to capital. Please do not stack your words of empowerment on top of all the shit we already bear. This is a 'real choice', made by real people, every day.

2. Perhaps your dealings with prostitutes have always been to use us as sexual tools; you cannot envisage respect and fair exchange in anything you do.

3. To say that pornography is racist and implies that coloured people are'animalistic' says more, I think, about you than the subject matter.

4. Why do you admit that the distribution of porn has absoloutely no bearing on the incidence of rape — and then insinuate a sentence later that it does!

Middle class femininists tried for twenty years to find a link (and have been — and still are — aided by big business, government and CIA donations and grants). They failed. Miserably. To see this myth repeated in a magazine that agitates for human liberation is appalling.

Since the majority of working class women have left the feminist movement — in digust — to the fate of its would-be middle class leaders, only careerists, college lecturers, the state (and now, it seems, *Organise!*) still peddle this pseudo-sociological claptrap.

5. It seems your reading has been as limited as your social life as you infer (fifth paragraph) that all pornography is produced by capitalists. I would refer you to *Eidos* magazine for starters. And this is as good a point as any to ask that, since you provide space and monetary appeals in your magazine to those who would burn and destroy magazines (letter from Bristol Women Against Pornography, same issue), perhaps you will allow me the space to inform your readers of work with the British State wish to ban and burn also: *Eidos* magazine's editor Brenda Tatelbaum intends to come to Britain to challenge Customs over its arbitarily enforced powers of seizure and would like donations towards the cost of travel and offers of overnight accommodation.

Eidos covers all aspects of sexual liberation in every issue of its (huge) newspaper, as well as one of the best review sections of internationally-produced radical and subversive literature around. I'd suggest the best way to show your support — and see what's going on in the sex industry to mash up capitalism — is to send off $18 for the latest issue, to *Eidos*, PO Box 96, Boston, MA 02137-0096, USA.

6. I'd also like to ask: do you tend to beat up everyone who disagrees with your moral standards? And suppress all culture that you don't own? And make us all get married

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Continued from back page

way so as to make life worthwhile, secure and free.

In capitalist society there are huge differences in wealth and power, so it is very likely that its victims turn to violence and robbery in ways which are similar to the working of capitalism itself. Anarchist communism in contrast is based upon social justice, equality, freedom and the abolition of money. Given these circumstances many of the preconditions which give rise to crime and, consequently, punishment, will disappear. Similarly, the abolition of the concept of victimless crime will remove a whole category of acts from the realm of wider social involvement.

The classical anarchist approach to the problem of anti-social behaviour is to remove them from the community and put them out of harm's way — in other words exile. How feasible this approach would be in the modern world is debatable. Why should one community have to cope with the social rejects of another? On the other hand why should a community have to put up with the anti- social actions of certain individuals? The issue of self-defence arises here, for surely every community has the right and responsibility to protect itself from internal and external threats.

It would be foolish to argue that anarchist communist society would implicitly mean the abolition of anti-social behaviour. Another anarchist approach to punishment is to empower the 'medical model'. In other words, wrongdoers are not bad but maybe mad. A danger with this attitude, despite its well-meaning approach is that different behaviour might be deemed to be unacceptably bad and a suitable case for treatment. In capitalist societies like Britain so-called 'secure' hospitals are no better than prisons. Perhaps they are worse.

There are no simple solutions to the problems posed by serial rapists and killers etc. However, two, hopefully not incompatible principles will apply, namely the justification of individual and communal self-defence and protection on one hand, and the freedom of the individual on the other. A caring approach, applied in a humanitarian and non-harmful way must in the end be the basis of an anarchist communist alternative to punishment.

and do it only in the missionary position? Maybe you should rename yourselves Red Action and go out and relive your days of schoolyard bullying — you are, after all doing the state's dirty work.

Yours in disgust
DL, London.

Organise! Oh dear, oh dear. It's sad to see that irrational insult hurling isn't restricted to the knee-jerk anti-porn tendency. Firstly, the pages of *Organise!* regularly carry articles meant to open up debate, rather than simply reflect ACF policy. The articles on pornography and the sex industry in number 37 were the opinion of the individual author as was the reply to JW in *Organise!* 38.

For the record, the bottom line for the ACF is total opposition to all forms of state censorship. We have no desire to give the state any more power than it presently enjoys and experience shows that the first victims of censorship are invariably those 'on the margins' or who represent a threat to 'conventional' morality. Therefore people like *Eidos* get hit rather than Paul Raymond, for example.

Over and above our opposition to state censorship the ACF does not take a position (missionary or otherwise) on the question of pornography. Needless to say we support sexworkers' self-organisation just as we support the self-organisation of all workers.

Sexworkers are engaged in alienated labour as much as any other group of workers working for wages/salary/money and the 'choice' to be exploited slaving in a sweatshop, slaving in an air-conditioned office or slaving in a strip-joint is a 'choice' imposed by capital, ie no real choice at all.

Your suggestion that a 'fair exchange' can exist (point two) is, we think, a dangerous illusion.

Rather than a 'fair day's work for a fair day's pay', surely we need to fight for the abolition of the entire market/wages/exchange system. That, however, implies a communist perspective, something which many involved in the porn debate, being essentially liberals, aren't likely to defend.

Scapegoats

Following on from the acquittal of cops for the death of Joy Gardner, came the news that they would not face disciplinary charges from their superiors.

Surprise! surprise! (Remember how the judge at the trial told the jury not to concern themselves about race or politics?) Yet another insult to black people in this country, to be followed by many more. The questioning of the commitment of Test cricketers Devon Malcolm and Philip DeFreitas. The allegation by Police Commissioner Condon that 80% of muggings were committed by young black men, for which no evidence was offered.

Condon is attempting to please the racists in the Metropolitan Police Force who were affrighted that any of their officers could even be brought to trial for tying up a black woman and wrapping tape around her face while she suffocated.

Pattern

On a larger scale, this is just part of a pattern where those at the lowest levels of society are scapegoated for all the wrongs of this society. The crisis brings out all the evils of racism and nationalism.

In France and Italy, the threat of Islam is summoned up to justify crack-downs and raids and to strengthen the ramparts of Fortress Europe. The old cry of 'Women back to the home!' is raised and single mothers are targetted as scapegoats. Another easy target 'Dole and social security scroungers' is taken out of mothballs.

Against this we continue to argue for the unity of all the working class against these attacks.

Obituary

We note the death of George Seldes, American radical journalist at the age of 104.

Born in 1890 in an anarchist colony set up by his father in New Jersey, Seldes got a job as a journalist. One of his first jobs was to report on the rape of a saleswoman by the son of a department store owner. The story was never used, and the space was used to sell the store more ads under the threat of blackmail.

Recalling this 80 years later, Seldes' voice still shook with anger. Working in Italy, he was able to gather enough material on Mussolini to write a hard-hitting biography *Sawdust Caesar*.

Returning from Spain after the Civil War, he was so disgusted by the American establishment press that he decided to set up his own newsletter *In Fact*. The paper published a suppressed study in 1939 on tobacco: 'Tobacco Smoking and Longevity', and Seldes often crossed swords with the tobacco industry, as well as taking on the American Legion's strike-breaking activities and Lindbergh's fascist sympathies. The paper was witch-hunted out of existence in 1950. Seldes is the father of independent radical journalism in America. He will also be remembered for reminiscences in the film 'Reds'.

ACF pamphlets in Serbo-Croat

Thanks to the efforts of comrades in Yugoslavia we now have translations of our pamphlets *As We See It* and *The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation* available in Serbo-Croat.

If you know anybody who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain, or you have contacts in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia or Macedonia where Serbo- Croat is understood then why not send them copies. They are available for 50p plus post from the London ACF address c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1.

Similarly we have a Greek translation of *As We See It*. If you can circulate this among the Greek-speaking population here, or you have contacts in Greece or Cyprus, then why not send for a copy? 50p plus post from London address. (A Portuguese translation of our *Aims and Principles* is also avalable for 20p plus postage).

Cold, cold heart

CEDRIC BROWN, chief executive of British Gas, is paid an enormous salary. Recently, salivating over quarterly profits of £605 million, he said: "Hopefully, we'll soon be getting some nice cold winters. That's what we'd like."

For him, cold winters mean huge profits for him and his top staff and the shareholders — as well as 8% VAT for the Treasury. For the old and the poor, cold winters mean rising bills they cannot afford. It means more deaths from hypothermia, in a country which has the highest death rate from this cause already. It sums up what this sick society is all about — the callous greed of the boss class.

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals.

All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.)

Deadlines for next issue are 2nd September for features and reviews, and 9th September for letters and news. All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:

ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Sell *Organise!*

ALTHOUGH OUR SALES are rising, we need to keep boosting circulation, so try and take a bundle to sell to friends and workmates. By selling *Organise!* you can help our ideas to reach more and more people.

Write for *Organise!* You can help to make *Organise!* yours by writing letters and articles.

Subscribe to *Organise!* Why not take out a sub to *Organise!* Better still take out a supporters' sub. Get your friends to subscribe or treat them to a sub.

Organise! will improve through a two-way process of criticism and feedback, and will better reflect the reality of struggle through readers communicating with us. Please write in with your ideas.

Please send all feedback, contributions for *Organise!*, requests for papers and Press Fund money (payable to ACF) to the London address.

Organise! back issues

BACK ISSUES OF *Organise!* (from issues 19-35) are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE:

- Issues 25, 30, 32, 33 and 36 are sold out.
- Issue 26: Women and revolution; Direct action.
- Issue 27: LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X.
- Issue 28: Recession; Detective fiction.
- Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise.
- Issue 31: Somalia; Travellers; Natural laws.
- Issue 35: Rwanda; Italy; Carmageddon; Poetry and revolution.
- Issue 37: Pornography debate; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.
- Issue 38: Militarism; Overpopulation myth; Cuba; Sport.

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Anarchist Communist Federation

THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION is an organisation of class struggle anarchists.

We have members and groups throughout Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales. Please write to the national address if you want to be put in contact.

Press Fund

An encouraging response to our last Press Appeal. £60 from Sheffield; £168 from East London; £50 Northumberland; £75 Central London; £20 Greece; £6 Bognor.

Thanks to all your generous donations this *Organise!* has a colour cover. But we still need money to make sure *Organise!* keeps coming out, our pamphlet publishing venture carries on, and our new posters and stickers appear. And we can have a colour cover every issue, not just one off. So rush us any sum, no matter how large or how small, to us. Everything will be gratefully received. Send us cheques, POs, IMOs, stamps, diamond necklaces, gold doubloons! You can even send us a standing order to our account. ALL donations to London address.

London ACF: Open Discussion Meetings

First Thursday of every month, 8pm at Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont St, London WC1. Nearest tube: Russell Square.

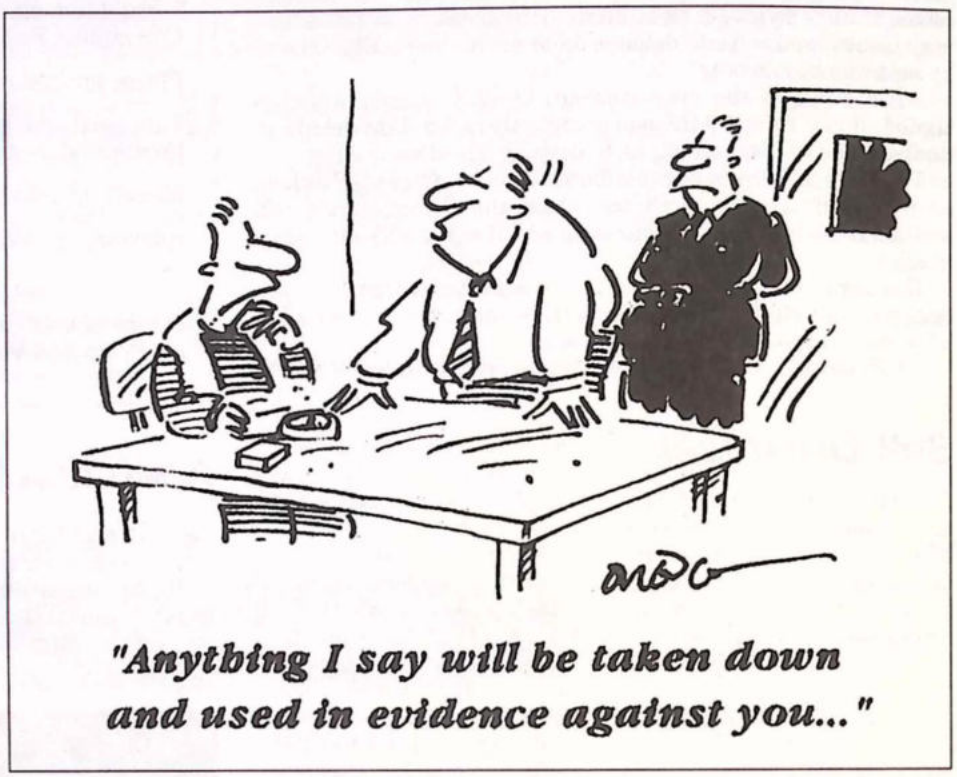
August 3rd:	Criminal Justice Act — What Next?
Sept 7th:	What's Wrong with Unions?
Oct 5th:	Counter Culture or Culture of Resistance

IMPORTANT! The new national address for the ACF is: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX
This is the same address as correspondence for Organise! and forACF (London)

Crime and punishment

THE DESIRE FOR punishment — the inflicting of pain on perceived wrong doers — has a long and inglorious history. Religions which are the hand-maidens of authoritarian rule are full of accounts of the most horrendous punishments dished out by God and his followers. An eternity of hellfire awaits even minor offenders against God's (and by extension rulers') order. It is an essential fact of punishment that it is imposed by people in power upon those who are relatively powerless — parents and teachers against children and the State against its citizens. It is equally true that punishment is ineffective in achieving its aims.

Anarchist communists have serious and fundamental objections to the idea of punishment on a number of grounds — moral, ideological and practical. Kropotkin, for example in his pamphlet *Prisons and their Moral Influence on Prisoners* demolishes all of the arguments used by the State to defend human incarceration. In what seems remarkably up to date arguments, he writes in 1877 that "Once a man (sic) has been in prison, he will return. It is inevitable, and statistics prove it. The annual reports of the administration of criminal justice in France show that one-half of all those who yearly get into the police courts for minor offences received their education in prisons... As for central prisons, more than one-third of the prisoners released from the supposedly correctional institutions are reimprisoned in the course of twelve months after their liberation" (from Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, Dover Books.



"Anything I say will be taken down and used in evidence against you..."

Pathological

The picture in Britain today is hardly different, indicating a pathological lack of imagination on the part of the State. In Britain around one person in a thousand is currently in prison — and crime is said to be continually on the rise! So much for their effectiveness in combatting crime.

There are a number of arguments which are used to support the idea of punishment. These include the idea that a given action deserves a certain reward or punishment. So, good children deserve rewards and naughty children deserve to receive a punishment. This may seem fine in principle, the problem arises in allocating a just and deserved punishment. What punishment is deserved for armed robbery for example, a slap on the wrist, community service, or execution? The punishment meted out in practice will vary according to the prejudices, values and attitudes and irritation of the judge in a given case. But the fact remains that whatever the punishment, it involves the imposition of suffering on the individual by the State on, usually, the lower orders. Since most laws are designed to protect private property and social inequality in defence of the rich, it is not suprising that most punishments are inflicted on the lower orders who do not share in the pickings.

Another standard argument for punishment is that it deters people from carrying out criminal and anti-social acts (again defined in terms which support the status-quo). The problem with this approach is that it does not work. As Kropotkin pointed out earlier in this article, prisons are full of persistent offenders who have frequently been punished. In the 17th Century in England, prisoners were executed in public for stealing silk handkerchiefs. Whilst the crowd was totally enthralled at the hanging, thieves would mingle and steal silk handkerchiefs! So much for the ultimate deterrent. People, quite simply, will only commit crimes (generally) if they are pretty sure they will not get caught and punished.

Primitive

Many people have a primitive basic need to extract revenge for a wrong committed against them. Blood feuds between families are examples of this approach, where one wrongdoing has to be matched by another from generation to generation, to the absurd point that the original cause has been forgotten about. However, as a rational response to wrong-doing, vengeance which is motivated strongly by irrational feelings, must rate as an inappropriate response.

A further approach includes the idea that wrongdoers should be helped or reformed, though there will always be an element of pain involved in the punishment. Unfortunately, the State has no real interest in exploring the social causes of crime, or for that matter questioning the nature of the problem. For every John McVicar or Jimmy Boyle 'rehabilitated', there are hundreds of thousands who have not. Punishment exists to keep the lid on social unrest but patently fails to do so.

So what is an anarchist communist view on punishment? Well, firstly it should be realised that all of the usual justifications and methods of punishment are rejected, especially in relation to anarchist communist society. The need to hurt people in the name of the State will disappear. Capitalism, in countless ways does psychological damage to people, so it is not surprising that this often finds expression in anti-social acts. Capitalist society divides, humiliates, and deprives millions of people. Anarchist communist society in contrast involves people in the

Continued on p17

ORGANISE!

FOR CLASS STRUGGLE ANARCHISM

ISSUE Nº 43 SUMMER 1996

60p (FREE TO PRISONERS)

ROADS TO REVOLUTION?

INTERVIEW WITH A ROADS ACTIVIST ● GREEN POLITICS ● ARTISTS OF THE CLASS WAR ● POLITICS OR RAVING AND 'E' ● AND LOADS MORE!

Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.
Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.
We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.
We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

ACF pamphlets in Serbo-Croat

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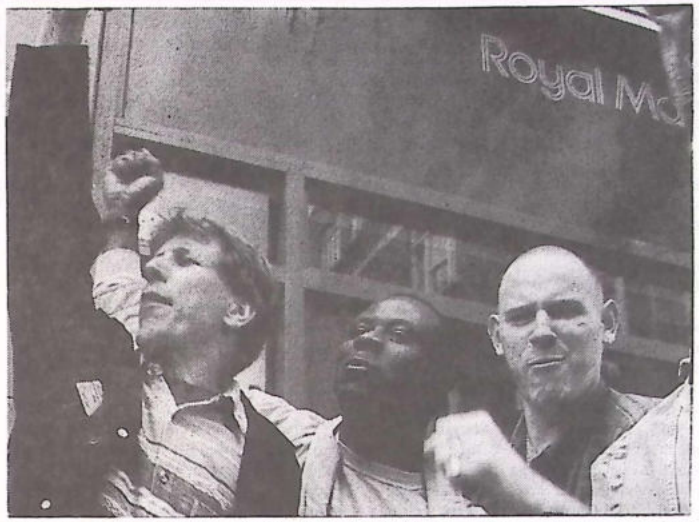
Industrial Notes

Postal strike



AFTER MORE THAN 2 years of wildcat strikes throughout the postal service in Britain, the postal workers union, the CWU, was forced to call a ballot for strike action. In 1993 there were 32 major work stoppages- this does not include the many actions that lasted less than a day- and in 1994 there were 65. This number increased in 1995 to 88. Through this guerrilla war, and certainly not due to the resistance of the CWU, Royal Mail's attempts to increase exploitation through extra workloads, speedups and job cuts have been seriously checked.

The CWU has consistently denounced the unofficial actions. Now it needs to call a series of strikes under the control of the union in order to "let off steam". In the second place it wants to use the strike to show the bosses that it is needed to police the postal workers. At the CWU National Conference in early June union leaders and many delegates spoke repeatedly about voting in a Labour government. The joint general secretary Tony Young emphasised that the CWU must keep in line with Labour and that some of the laws passed by the Tories against workplace militancy must be retained under a Labour government. He was echoed by his partner as general secretary, Alan Johnson. A motion to commit the union to backing Labour's plan for a commission with the bosses to decide a minimum wage was carried. The Labour shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook made an appearance at conference, as did fellow shadow cabinet member Margaret Beckett. Both Beckett and Cook are the soft cops of New Labour. They aim to portray themselves as the real heart of Labour. Cook is beginning to specialise in these appearances. At the Scottish TUC conference in April he reaffirmed that Labour's links with the unions were unbreakable. Despite what the national newspapers say, Cook is not a leader of the Left (as the Daily Mail described him) but works in tandem with Blair. Whilst Blair is off pleasing the CBI and newspaper tycoons, Cook's job is to keep the unions sweet and make sure that Labour retain the union vote and union support.

Johnson and Young are important allies of Blair. They will attempt to defuse the struggle and call off any action carried out by postal workers. The Labour leadership is putting massive pressure on the CWU executive to sabotage the strike action. At the CWU conference Johnson made reference on a number of occasions to the "British public" and "public opinion". He is seriously worried by the mood of militancy among postal workers. Already an unofficial conference of 150 activists in March in London has met with condemnation by the CWU. In a continuation of the wildcats, 60 workers at Gateshead Team Valley sorting office walked out after management refused to stick by an agreement on overtime and using temporary workers a week before the first official strike. They did this without a ballot and were soon joined by another 500 workers. The bosses went to the courts to declare the strike illegal and the CWU denounced the strike. 50 workers at Willesden walked out briefly on June 20 over the same issues. At the beginning of June, posties officially struck in Wakefield and Harrogate over the victimisation of a worker who had refused to carry out bosses' instructions.

Over the last 10 years the CWU has directly collaborated with Royal Mail bosses by agreeing to Sunday working and a continuing erosion of work conditions for postal workers. Indeed thanks to the CWU productivity -read more efficient exploitation of the workforce- has increased by more than 60%. During the strikes, continuing CWU sabotage continued when it issued a circular telling postal workers not involved in the strike ballot to cross picket lines. This involved mainly part-time casuals, although some full-time workers scabbed as well. The CWU told those posties who had begun their shifts before the start of the strike at midnight to continue working to the end of their shift. The official union strike leaflet handed out said that the postal workers "didn't want to be out on strike"!

What is directly at stake is the rejection of the Employee Agenda proposed by the Royal Mail bosses. This proposes the introduction of Team Quality Management which would introduce 'team working' through 'team talks, action plans and personal development modules'. Teams would have to agree to improve efficiency and performance and cover for other workers off sick or on holiday. Local and national agreements would be scrapped so that workers would get a cut in pay! This despite profits this year for Royal Mail of £500m and the productivity increases already mentioned. But now the Royal Mail has to compete with national and international rivals, who already have these methods of working.

Behind all of this is the Conservative Government which is talking about suspending the Royal Mail's monopoly of mail delivery so that the private outfits can strike-break. The Government also wants to hand the delivery of junk mail over to private companies or separate it off into a Public Limited Company within the Royal Mail. This is in line with the European Union plan for privatisation of all direct mail throughout the EU. This would mean the end of national first and second class stamps, with zone charges so

that it would cost more to deliver from London to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and between the regions of England.

Postal workers will not only have to fight the Royal Mail bosses, they will have to fight the Government and all of its forces, as well as the schemes of the EU. They will have to start increasing contacts and creating coordinations between postal workers on an Europe-wide scale. They will have to combat the private companies. Labour has condemned any actions and through its allies in the CWU will do its utmost to destroy postal workers militant action and organisation. The struggle that the postal workers are facing is one that must go against the union and the State. They deserve total support from throughout the working class.

Tube Workers

A number of one-day strikes has taken place over this summer on the London Underground starting out with train drivers who are members of the rail union ASLEF. There is simmering discontent among Tube workers and the union has attempted to head off strike action by calling a number of ballots over the last few years, which were then cancelled. Last year a massive strike vote was ignored and a dirty deal stitched up between ASLEF and the bosses. This ploy has exasperated Tube workers. For the same reasons as the CWU, to head off pressure from workers and to show that ASLEF has some clout and is worth the employers' while negotiating with, ASLEF has now called a number of actions for a reduction in the working week. The Tube bosses are attempting to renege on a one hour reduction agreed last year. Meanwhile the other rail union on the tube, the RMT, has-surprise, surprise! failed to call out train driver members at the same time as the ASLEF actions. Under pressure from workers, a combined strike has taken place as we go to press. The RMT has been equivocal to say the least in whether it will instruct its members to cross ASLEF picket lines. The message given by assistant general secretary Bob Crow and executive council member Pat Sikorski (Both members of Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, and the latter a closet Trot, member of the Fourth International Supporters Caucus, operating inside the SLP as Scargill's heavies) was ambivalent on this question when they addressed RMT members in the first week of June. Both RMT and ASLEF have continually sabotaged strike ballots, and collaborated in introducing the bosses plans for getting the tube ready for privatisation which they began introducing in 1991. Both Crow and Sikorski have acted as saboteurs of militant action in the past. In the late 80s they were active on the Shepherd Pie rank and file committee which attempted to force unofficial actions into a trade union straitjacket. They then became important RMT officials, and as such helped in the sabotage of the 1992 strike (It's no surprise that they are part of the leadership of the SLP-this party represents the interests of the "left" union bureaucrats). Tube workers have to ignore all union affiliations, and come together in coordinations, going out to make contact and get support and solidarity action from other workers, in particular other London transport workers like the bus workers and BR workers, who are as much under attack as they are. Bus drivers throughout London have been involved in strike actions over the last year, the most recent being 3 days of strikes in South East London, in the Plumstead, Catford and Bromley garages bossed by Selkent. The third strike was bolstered by 60 maintenance and cleaning staff starting a work to rule. However, the union the TGWU, quickly moved to defuse the action through a ballot. The strikes were against conditions and pay for new starters with 48 hours a week behind the wheel, no sick pay, £% an hour, 13 hour spreadovers, and no bonuses like spreadover payments. The union officials said that new starters were no concern of the workers and they should only think about their own pay packet. New drivers knew what they were accepting! So no the TGWU has sabotaged the actions and given a thumbs-up to a two-tier system, which will pit worker against worker. The Union divides us workers! We must organise outside and against it!

Firefighters

Like the post and the tube and buses, the fire brigades have had a history of militant action over the last 2 years. On Merseyside, firefighters threatened to strike in early June when a worker was threatened with the sack for refusing to attend a course, which was used as a pretext to change shifts by the fire bosses at Croxteth. The bosses were forced to back down

In Derbyshire 800 firefighters struck twice for 9 hours against cuts planned by the Labour council. The Council responded by trying to get an injunction out under the anti-union laws brought in by the Conservatives. This failed, and the Council ended up with a bill for £40,000 costs paid out of council tax! Now the Council is using Army Green Goddesses and RAF rescue vehicles as we go to press. Tony Benn, so called Left Labour MP for the area, has argued against the strike action, which he said would damage workers and the Council. The Council hopes that firefighters from neighbouring regions will scab. Manchester and Nottinghamshire firefighters made it clear that they would refuse to do this.

In Essex the firefighters union the FBU sabotaged strike action after a massive vote in favour against cuts imposed by the council. The FBU accepted cuts of £700,000 after the Council revised its original cuts package of £1.3 million. The strikes were to coincide with the June 10 actions of the Derbyshire workers. Again the FBU has okayed wage cuts, station closures, speed-ups, part-time working replacing full-time working. Again the message is clear-firefighters must organise outside and against the unions, against the Armed forces strike breakers and the Tory and Labour central and local authorities.

Labour breaks out the riot gear!

AS THE POLITICAL parties gear up for an impending election, Labour is energetically seeking to mark itself out as the party that speaks for the "Nation". To do this, it needs to show that it is the defender of so-called 'social unity, that it is the inheritor of the social consensus constructed by both the Conservatives and Labour in the immediate post-war years. It has to underline national unity, it has to speak as the voice of reason. It has to show it enthusiastically supports the values of what is portrayed as a Golden Age of Britain before the last 15 years of ruling class attack under the Thatcher and Major regimes. This means it has to show it is able to govern well. It has to impress sections of the boss class, who are showing themselves more open to backing Labour, both verbally, financially and through the ballot box. It seeks to get the support of some of the press barons, whose support at election time would be valuable. It looks towards the vote of sections of the population that have traditionally voted Conservative or Liberal. This means that it has to present itself as a staunch advocate of law and order, and of traditional values.

Straw Dog

This is why Jack Straw has stated that when Labour are in office they will adopt "zero tolerance" towards "anti-social behaviour". Part of this get-tough policy will apparently include a curfew on under 10 year olds after 9pm. This will not be carried out by the State. Straw would offload the burden of this extra policing onto local councils. At one fell swoop he can demonise children and prepare the way for methods of the Strong State. Not surprisingly, seeing as how New Labour look towards the US Democratic Party as a model, Straw has taken a leaf out of Clinton's book. The US President gave his backing to a 8pm curfew imposed on under-17s in New Orleans. Straw also proposed a single final warning for young offenders to replace the present system of a series of cautions.

Wet Blunkett

David Blunkett, Labour's spokesman on education, has demanded a return to traditional teaching methods. What this means is not smaller classes and good facilities, as well as well qualified teachers, but larger classes and lessons by rote. Labour will make no effort to put any more money into schools, but instead seeks to steal one of the Conservatives' traditional slogans. Earlier he had stated that student grants would be abolished under Labour, with a saving of £1 billion. He proposed a system of extended loans. This would aggravate the situation for any working class student, already suffering hardship. But as Blunkett himself said:" The great advantage of this scheme is that it helps substantially the middle and lower-middle income parents". Tough if you're working class.

Cuts and gagging

For his part, Gordon Brown, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, made clear that the squeeze on public spending, initiated by the Callaghan-led Labour government and then perpetuated by the Conservatives, would continue under his rule. He talked about "making Britain great again", about partnership with the private sector, about cutting out waste. Translated into plain English, this means that the rundown of the public sector will continue, as will the creeping privatisation, as well as continuing sackings and virtual wage freezes for public sector workers. Brown is ending out signals to the boss class that things will be the same in Labour hands, in fact this way of carrying on will be applied more efficiently!

Chris Smith, speaking on Labour's plans for welfare, stressed the increasing role of private insurance. He also called for a redefinition of poverty, copying Conservatives' oft-expressed views. This means that millions can be taken off welfare benefits by saying that they're not poor in the first place! Coupled with proposals to cut child benefit and the projected "work for benefit" schemes Labour shows that it is as fully committed to the dismantling of welfarism as the Conservatives.

Any signs of dissent, indeed any indications that Labour will adopt even 'liberal' measures are quickly stamped on by the Labour leadership. When Clare Short, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, echoed what several chief constables had already said about the legalisation of cannabis, she was promptly reprimanded. Her later pronouncements on taxing the rich were also slapped down. Mark Fisher, the Shadow Arts spokesperson, was similarly reprimanded after he announced that the Elgin Marbles might be returned to Greece. Ron Davies, Shadow Welsh Secretary, was mugged by the Labour leadership after his mild criticisms of the monarchy. In the aftermath Tony Blair fell over himself in showing how much he adored the Royals.

Firm and Unfair

Every indication is that if Labour come to power either later in the year or next year, they will continue to supervise the boss class's attacks on the mass of the population. Further, that they will be prepared to use very strong measures to carry their policies out, increasing police powers and deploying the Armed Forces if necessary, to counter any strike action. There should be no complacency that things will be better, if only slightly, under Labour. We must be ready for attacks on our class from Labour, ready with the arguments against Labourism and ready with plans to organise the resistance.

Since the above was written, the new stance of Labour was firmed up in late June. In preparation for The Road to The Manifesto, a policy prospectus put out by the leadership, Blair made it clear that the national executive will draw up a list of approved parliamentary candidates after the next election from which local parties should choose, in order to weed out any dissidents. Trade spokesman Kim Howells stated that Labour was pro-competition-he was speaking the truth!- and his counterpart for Home Affairs George Howarth said that he would be tougher on drugs than the Conservatives.

The Road to the Manifesto itself gave full form to the Labour Party's policies. It emphasised its toughness on crime with fast-track sentencing of "persistent young offenders", and swift reduction in unemployment which can easily be translated into forcing people off the dole into low-paid jobs, it stated that it would do little to reverse anti-strike laws, it encouraged private pensions, it condoned privatisation in the health service, it pledged to keep on with building Trident nuclear submarines, it emphasised it was for one nation and for a stake-holder economy. There can be no excuse at all for anyone calling themselves a socialist to remain within the Labour Party. *The Labour Party is a capitalist party, it always has been.* The fact that developments in capitalism have forced it to drop any "socialist rhetoric" should not blind us to this fact. Any vote for Labour, with or "without illusions" is a vote for the continuing of Business As Usual.

Poverty Related Pay

OPPOSITION TO THE Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) from inside the dole office is hampered by the idea that implementing the JSA is in the 'interest' of the workforce. This so called 'interest' is commonly known as Performance Related Pay (PRP). So how does PRP work? Firstly, objectives are set for the dole office on a national level, these objectives are then broken down into regional objectives, further divided into districts and divided again into office objectives, where finally the manager breaks the objectives down for individual workers.

Objectives Equal More Money

So how are those objectives used to improve pay? Each individual worker is set objectives, agreed with their line manager and in turn with their office manager. Each worker is monitored throughout the year by their managers (by themselves and other workers for that matter). Once a year how well each worker has 'performed' is assessed, whether they have met their objectives, failed to meet them or, as in the case of the over enthusiastic worker, superseded them. Then a 'box marking' is attributed to each worker. The 'box marking' is just like being graded at school; Box 1/A (A is for ACE), Box 2/B (B is for BRILL) and Box 3/C (C is for CRAP). Once each worker has been graded their cut of the wage rise for that year has been decided.

Objectives Equal Hassle

So what are these objectives which are in the 'interests' of the workers to achieve? The typical list of objectives will require each worker to;

1. get a varying number of claimants benefit cut or stopped on the grounds that they are A. Not available for employment B. Not actively seeking employment C: Placing restrictions upon themselves D. Refusing employment.

2. Place a varying number of claimants into employment via the job centre.

3. Place a varying number of claimants onto specific government courses .

Getting claimants to sign off, usually using tactics not dissimilar from those used by the police, is one of the fraud officers PRP objectives and is not as yet a written objective for the ordinary dole office worker.

The Unions

The dole office workers Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) may claim to be opposed to PRP on the grounds that it is "divisive", but in reality it fails to have had any effect on this pay scheme. Whilst the CPSA accurately point out that workers are divided by PRP, and encouraged to be interested only in themselves developing contempt for one another, CPSA fails to recognise the consequences of PRP on the claimants and how it divides the workers and claimants further. Consequently the CPSA's opposition to the JSA is failing to reach dole office workers, as is its argument that PRP is not in their 'interest'.

PRP Equal Hassle

PRP is allowing dole officers to treat claimants like shit, creating the idea that 'they're only doing their job', and at the same time acting out of 'self-interest' improving their chances of getting a bigger cut of the wage rise. PRP is a god send to those over enthusiastic individuals who take great pleasure from treating claimants like shit. So next time a claimant is hassled its not a simple case of faceless bureaucracy treating people as no more that numbers, but that claimant may well be on the way to being a statistic achieved and marked against a list of objectives.

Effective Organising

A hassle free signing on is largely reliant upon the worker who hasn't bought the idea that PRP is in their 'interest' and doesn't care if they meet their objectives or not. However opposition to the JSA from the inside needs more than that if it is to work. Effective opposition to PRP coupled with a sense of unity with claimants, as opposed to contempt for them, would be welcome. But in the meantime Groundswell and unemployed activists aren't sitting on their backsides waiting for the pig to learn to fly. We are getting active, and organising from the 'outside'.

GET ACTIVE

GROUNDSWELL IS A loose network of autonomous groups and individuals united against the JSA concentrating upon gathering information about the JSA, distributing and co-ordinating that information, and offering practical advice and support against the JSA. Groundswell is organised around the idea of 'no wage slavery, no dole slavery', offering a critique of the work ethic so beloved of the left.

The next Groundswell is being held in Nottingham 10th August. Information about this meeting and local and national campaigning can be obtained by writing to;

Groundswell
c/o Claimants Action Group
Princes Street
Oxford
OX4 1HU

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh
c/o Peace and Justice
St Johns
Princes Street
Edinburgh

or directly to the ACF at
c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

RETURN OF THE DIGGERS

ON SUNDAY 5th May, 1996 a campaign calling itself The Land Is Ours organised a land occupation on thirteen acres of derelict land. Around 300 people arrived in two coaches. The land is situated on York Road in Wandsworth, South London and is owned by Guinness.

When the people reached the site they began to transform it into a 'sustainable eco-village'. The name Pure Genius was decided on (it was previously called Gargoyle Wharf). They started off with building Octavia's Love Nest, a large wooden octagonal building in which to have meetings, workshops, entertainment, temporary sleeping, etc. People constructed their own temporary homes in the forms of tepees, tents, and benders.

For the first week there were over 100 people permanently on site with a few thousand people visiting and participating during the week. Now roughly seventy people live on the site on a permanent basis and help to build more permanent, 'low-impact' housing both individually and collectively.

On Wednesday 8th, Colin Ward came to the site and gave a talk in Octavia's Love Nest about the British squatters movement in the mid-40's. The talk was attended by most people on site and seemed to be accepted very well.

As well as construction of the buildings, there was the task of making the flower and vegetable gardens, using an agricultural technique called "permaculture"; making the land (which was previously a brewery site and before that an oil refinery!) useable despite the poor soil quality and polluted land. People also made a pond, rock gardens, walkways lined with painted stones, wire sculptures, banners and beautiful murals around the front entrance and also inside of the site.

Meal times are usually communal, with most people gathering around the main camp fire. Food supplies come from people donating and also cheap or free food 'tatted' at the end of the market day. Toilet facilities include two compost toilets and a shallow trench.

Entertainment at Pure Genius has included acoustic music (with much singing of The Diggers' Song), circus stunts, story-telling and an excellent performance of the anti-capitalist environmental play Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish.

On the site are all sorts of people. There are many people from abroad: on the erection of a pyramidal sleeping structure, in which five people participated, one person was English, two American, one a New Zealander and the other a Canadian. There were also people present from the Green Party, Freedom (John Rety and Colin Ward), and many people from Newbury and other road protests. One ACF member stayed on site for all of the first week and on the evening of Saturday 11th, five other ACF members turned up, had a look around the site, visited someone in their tepee and left for the pub with two Class War members who happened to be visiting at the same time.

Anarchy in Action?

John Rety claimed that this is "anarchy in action" and that he has "now seen anarchy in practice and, so far, it works." (Freedom, 18th May) This is not anarchy. Anarchy means "freedom and justice for all". There are about seventy people living on Pure Genius and there are almost six billion people in the world. As long as most of the world lives in slavery, poverty and brutality, we will not see anarchy. If anarchy does not mean freedom and justice for all then we could say that a woman living isolated on an island is, of and by herself, Anarchy. (Not to mention that she would be a slave to her work, and that, as an individual, her potential could only be realised by its gratification in human society!) Also there is the fact that the people participating in the land occupation live neither under freedom nor justice. As long as the government has its army of policemen and soldiers no one will really be free, and the small amount of freedom they allow is transitory and only guaranteed to the extent that the people can fight for it. As long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few have all the good things of life, there is not justice.

Property is Theft!

This land occupation was undoubtedly propaganda by the deed (as opposed to propaganda of the deed). The question is, what was the message of this propaganda? Anarchists would, of course, have liked it to be a message of "Property is theft" (as the proto-anarchist Proudhon said). It seems however that the main messages are things like "sensible land use" and The Land Is Ours (who can't seem to stress enough that they are "a campaign, not an organisation") also say that they "want to highlight urban dereliction". Their participation in the legal process and their negotiations with Guinness are not anarchistic and it is silly to be saying "The land is ours!" while at the same time saying "Please, can't we just use a little bit of the land which your not using right now?" Indeed, The Land Is Ours have said that they want to "make good use of derelict sites", but what about the good property, with housing and infrastructure already there?

They claim it is not an 'ideological squat' but they obviously do have an ideology, it is just one which is un-ambitious and reformist. The people 'behind' the 'campaign' have expressed that many of them are for common ownership of all social property etc. and so have most of the people involved. But none of this made it into the media and they have admitted that they are deliberately trying to tone the politics down for the sake of the media. The media coverage was very positive, but at what expense? They have either tried to portray it as a bunch of hippies doing earth dances or as some sort of experiment led by a few Oxford intellectuals (which it may well be).

There were three main positive aspects of the campaign.

1. The anarchistic organisation and structure of it. People live communally, eat communally and work collectively. No-one is 'in charge' and people organise their projects autonomously.

2. The Ideological and historical background for their actions is decidedly anarchist. On the whole they seem to have an affinity with the Diggers' anarchist communist ethic. They are unquestionably anti-capitalist and anti-government and pro-self-organisation and autonomy. The presence of Anarchists on site, including John Rety, ACF and Colin Ward, and their

participation in the decision making and work on the site definitely helped to strengthen the libertarian content of the campaign.

3. Involvement with local people. Leaflets were handed out to passers-by and all the local residences were leafleted telling them what's going on and asking that they get involved. Several locals were highly involved in the decision making process, in leaflet production and distribution and work etc. All the local people who visited the site were positive and said that they supported what was being done. This helped to strengthen links between ordinary working class people and political activists and to expose them to ideas and attitudes which they otherwise might not have heard.

Is it all Worthwhile?

Maybe projects like these are a waste of time and end up being elitist and only benefiting a few people while not causing any real social change. Obviously we shouldn't expect that these things, by themselves, are going to radically alter the world ("Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it." - Mahatma Gandhi), but things like this could be worthwhile in addition to other struggles.

If we think that projects like this may be worthwhile, then we should ask ourselves whether we should get more involved in future projects and try to counter those who try to make it 'media friendly'.

You poor take courage,

You rich take care,

This Earth was made a Common Treasury

For everyone to share,

All things in common, all people one.

- The Diggers' Song

For surely this particular property of mine and thine hath brought in all misery upon people.

- Gerrard Winstanley

PEACE PROCESS IN PIECES

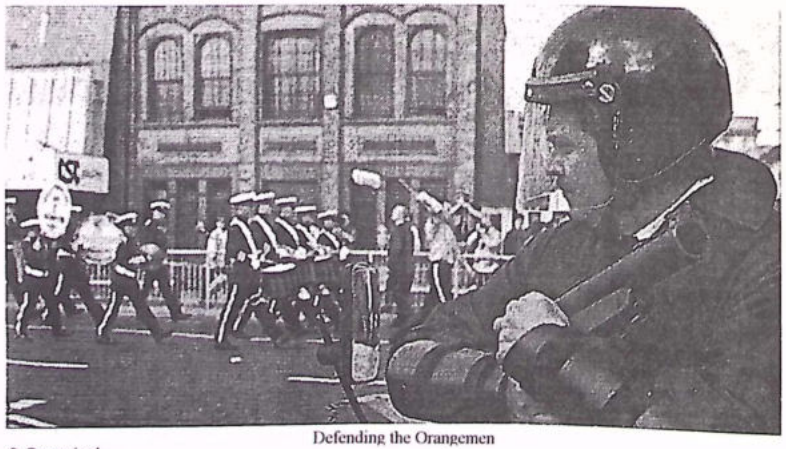
THE RECENT ELECTIONS in Northern Ireland on May 30 showed the rifts and stresses that are growing within both Unionism and Republicanism.

The Unionists had insisted on these elections, and the Major administration, who depend on their support for keeping in power, readily agreed. The results showed that support for the Ulster Unionist Party, led by David Trimble, has fallen in practically every area. The combined Unionist vote, was now split between 11 different parties. This reflects the fragmenting unity among Protestants, where class interests are beginning to re-emerge. The Protestant working class, was relatively cushioned economically, in comparison to Catholic workers, in terms of jobs and standards of living. But increasing levels of unemployment, attacks on welfare benefits and rising poverty have made many worry about the future. They begin to question whether the Northern Ireland State can guarantee the living standards to which they were accustomed. This explains the vote for the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party, both of which use working class rhetoric. Both of these parties are the political wings of Loyalist paramilitaries, have the shadowy presence of British intelligence hovering behind them. Their bogus talk of class conflict is designed to ensure that the Protestant working class stays within the limits of Loyalist sectarianism (See the article in Organise!38 on these parties). Nevertheless, a certain disenchantment and disorientation seems apparent in the lower than average turnout, where the vote is traditionally higher than in Britain.

For its part Sinn Fein did nothing to win over Protestant workers. In the past it has come out with the rhetoric of saying that it fights for all the people-notice the word people and not working class but its practice during the election revealed that this was Nationalist cant and it concentrated on trying to prove how it represented and defended the Catholic minority .It got its highest vote ever in the elections - over 15 per cent, in some Catholic strongholds polling as much as 50 per cent.

In some ways, this vote for Sinn Fein vindicates Gerry Adams' position. One of several reasons that Sinn Fein abandoned its old policies was because electoral support was diminishing. Adams can justify his stance by pointing to this increased vote. Sinn Fein had decided that joint work with the Dublin government, the Social Democratic and Labour Party(SDLP)in the North and the Irish American lobby would "advance the struggle", leading on to the TUAS - totally unarmed strategy.

This culminated in to Adams' meeting with President Clinton at the White House. This collaboration with Sinn Fein is important to Clinton for a number of reasons. He hopes to retain and indeed increase the Irish-American electoral support for the Democrats. He hopes to boost his image as world peace maker, also very helpful at the polls. In line with US interests, a world wide "American peace" is required to boost America's position as world policeman. US economic interests would prefer "peace"(absence of armed conflict and civil strife) so that they can better exploit the working class in Northern Ireland, and indeed throughout Ireland.



Defending the Orangemen

Sinn Fein and the IRA could be used as a pawn in the USA's game in Ireland, with its increasing economic and political influence in the South.

Collapse

Things have moved on from this scenario. A few weeks after the ceasefire, the Reynolds government in the South collapsed following a child abuse scandal in which Catholic priests were involved. The Major administration, under pressure from the Unionists, rejected the findings of the Mitchell commission on decommissioning and announced that elections would take place in the North. Labour failed to oppose this move, and abjectly followed every precondition for talks laid down by the Tories. This means a big reverse for the TUAS tactic. The leadership of Sinn Fein, in order to further its change in tactics, has made it clear, both to Republicans in general, and to the rest of the world, that its previous tactic of bullet and ballot box was a failure, and a United Ireland was not achievable using these methods. Indeed, the leadership dropped any talk of a United Socialist Ireland, in line with this, and in order to placate its allies in the new partnership.

These allies, including the SDLP, certainly do not want any sort of United Ireland. They want political and economic stability. This leads on to Nationalists and Unionists running their own areas, with the British, Irish and American administrations acting to police this. This would lead, not to a ending of the sectarian divide, but to its institutionalisation, and the possible development of specific 'enclaves'. Remind you of somewhere else?

Adams has publicly announced that Sinn Fein would drop the United Ireland demand. He admitted as much in a Financial Times interview. Sinn Fein has agreed to practically everything put forward by the Mitchell commission. The continued use of armed struggle by the IRA is either a bargaining counter used by the Republican leadership to squeeze more concessions out of the British government or a sign of dissent within Republican ranks, or a combination of both. Opposition to the leadership's manoeuvres does exist , both in the north and the south. For example Cork Sinn Fein sent out an open letter to all Sinn Fein branches calling for opposition to the leadership's concessions to Mitchell.

What is apparent in all of this is the increased failure of Republicanism to offer any solutions to the social and economic problems that plague Irish working people. This, and the divisions that are beginning to emerge within Loyalist ranks, point to the possibility of new spaces opening up for revolutionary libertarian politics. The small numbers of Irish revolutionary Anarchists must do their utmost to build a libertarian alternative, and revolutionaries in Britain must express their support and solidarity.

One interesting result of the dead-end in the peace-talks is the enhanced position of Labour in the eyes of sections of the British ruling class and State. A desire for "stability" to pursue economic interests in Ireland is hindered by the Conservative administration's blocking of the "peace process", hostages to the Unionists as they are. A Labour government would be unlikely to be in this position. This is one of many reasons why Blair and Co. are being feted in the media.

Update

All of the above has been highlighted by the events of the "marching season" when the RUC, with the approval of the British government, allowed the Orangemen to march through a Nationalist area after 5 days of stand-off. This shows how deeply the Conservative government is in hock to the Loyalists; it also shows the stresses among the movers in the peace talks, with polarisation between the British government and the Irish government/SDLP. The TUAS policy of the Sinn Fein leadership is in shreds and there is clamour among the Catholic population of the North for a return to armed action to defend their areas against Loyalist aggression. The Enniskillen bombing is a strong indicator of this. There is a distinct possibility that now there will be a rift between those who want to continue with the policies of the leadership and those who wish to return to armed action, coupled with a call for a United Ireland-socialist or otherwise. This scenario is borne out by history, with a series of splits in Republican ranks between those who wanted to do a deal with the British State and those who took a more intransigent position. But the intransigent position is not an option for Anarchist Communists. It is based on elitist armed action, and no attempt at united class action. The way capitalism has evolved, with production spread all over the world, makes the Nation State less and less important for the needs of ruling class economics. Separate national economies are more and more impossible, and this in its turn has rendered any national liberation movements mute in opposition to imperialism. They now hustle to be first in line in offering sources of cheap labour and raw materials to the multinational and transnational corporations.

For their part the mainstream Loyalist politicians like Trimble and co. are keen to broker a deal to hang on to power in their own areas. As we noted in *Organise!* 42 this will also be jeopardised by those who want confrontation with Catholics, and who advocate driving out Catholics from predominantly Protestant areas. The latest events have shown that the process of disintegration of both Loyalist and Republican blocs is accelerating.

ACE

Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Anarchism -As We See It. A new revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE. NEW EDITION JUST OUT!

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary theory and practice. 60p & SAE. 6th printing now available.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation. Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a "vanguard" party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.

Basic Bakunin. A revised edition of our very popular pamphlet on one of the founders of revolutionary anarchism.

Aspects of Anarchism. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism. 30p & SAE.

Making Progress is out of print at the moment.

COMING SOON! By the time that this issue of Organise! appears 2 new ACE pamphlets will be well under way- *Where there's Brass there's Muck*, our pamphlet on ecology, and a pamphlet on the History of Anarchist Communism in Japan, written by John Crump. October should hopefully see the appearance of our *Manifesto for the Millenium*. It gives an analysis of the present state of society and a revolutionary programme for how to fight for an Anarchist Communist world.

ROADS OUT AHEAD

INTERVIEW WITH AN ANTI -ROADS protester and Essex Anarchist

ORGANISE! How did you become involved in the Anti-Roads movement?

EA I met some people in London and became friends with them. They were involved in the anti-roads protests and various other campaigns; they had been heavily involved in the 'No M11' campaign in East London since it started. I met some more people, and because I've got anarchist views anyway became more involved myself, because I saw that the motorway was just another way the authorities were taking liberties with people's lives, making people who have lived in their houses for years move out (like Dolly, who was 93). Also the ecological side of it, pollution and how they are fucking up people's health and the ozone layer.

ORGANISE! What campaigns have you been involved in?

EA - I've mainly been involved in the 'No M11' in East London, I was on that campaign for the best part of a year, doing other things as well like anarchist stuff, marches, meetings. I was involved in animal liberation campaigns like Brightlingsea, I nearly got nicked there for trying to climb up the side of one of the lorries, to get on the roof; I got grabbed but I pulled myself away from the police officer and escaped by running away through the crowd! I went down to Kent as well to a 2 day 'Stop Work On The Road', building site invasions and that. There was a full moon party, the organisers said in the local paper that they were expecting 2000 road protesters, so the police were ready for those numbers, out numbering the protesters by 6 to 1, as there were only about 250 protesters turned up. They were at one of the two camps the Blue group had built and set up, 70 protesters on site, and about 200 Old Bill turned up and formed a circle all around us. They read out the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) about how they thought there was going to be a party or illegal rave there that night, and anybody who was (found) within a 5 mile radius of that area in the next hour was liable for arrest. One of the protesters who had been there for a few months asked us if we could help carry his tent, a big 12 person army job, me and my mates said yes. We helped him carry it and all his belongings, everything in the middle of the tent. We had to go across building sites, ploughed fields (for) the full length of the route. Then the police pulled up, 2 vans, they all came up to me and said was I at the site when the C.J.A order was given out, and as it was one and a half hours since it was given out I was under arrest as I was only three and a half miles away. They took me to an intelligence gathering unit set up in a local school, staffed by the C.I.D and photographed and questioned me. I had to go to court and was fined £40 and given a conditional discharge for the offence of failing to leave the land fast enough when the order was given. It was section B or C of the C.J.A, and the jury were out for three and a half hours deciding what to do with us, cause we was the first people to be up for that offence in Kent. Five of us went "not guilty", and four of us were found guilty. I also went to Newbury when it first started, the first three weeks, it was right good because we stopped them from doing any work in that time. Then the police started to help the security guards, they were no longer keeping an eye on things and having an unbiased view as they say they are supposed to, being there to make sure there is no breach of the peace. Every time the protesters broke through the security lines or got the better of them, the police jumped in and took the security side.

Protesters

ORGANISE! What were the backgrounds of the different people involved?

E.A - I would say that most of the people involved in these campaigns were 'alternative' types, hippies and new agers, and just local residents who has been around the area the motorway is built in. All sorts in general, but some lunch outs, (people who) don't do any work, just there for free grub and that.

ORGANISE! Has the movement changed, and if so, in what ways?

E.A - I think the only way that it has changed really is that there seems to be a lot more people getting involved, at the start a lot of the protesters were alternative types, individualist anarchists and just locals. Now groups of people come from different areas all over the place, just for weekends and a week at a time, liberal "fluffy" types, middle class greens, seems sometimes as if it's become almost fashionable to be a protester, weekends away and all that, bed and breakfast style.

ORGANISE! -Has the Anti-Road movement radicalised people?

E.A -Yes, I do think so, in some ways. Like normal people who you would have at one time called straight goers or law-abiding citizens, just local people, residents in the area where the roads are going through, have seen what attitude the police have, and been man-handled themselves, and even arrested. Old ladies and middle class, middle aged people who have been pushed about, arrested by police in full riot gear, the Old Bill have turned whole communities against them.

ORGANISE!-What are the politics of the people involved?

E.A - I think that most of the hard core protesters that live in the tree houses 70 foot off the ground, and travel from one road protest to another where there are trees involved, the real McCoy sleeping in tree houses when it's minus 2 or 3 , would call themselves anarchists. They are individualists, because when I tell them I'm a member of the ACF they always say if I'm an anarchist, why do I need to be a part of an organisation? They can't seem to grasp that we need to be organised, to be in the position to fight the capitalists and the Ruling Classes -the State- effectively.

I reckon that most people involved at the moment are fluffies and liberal woolly types: believers in non-violent direct action. There are a few socialists and people who call themselves nothing at all, also local residents who are sympathetic and donate food and stuff. All the different Green parties also try to get involved of course, trying to make it their protest, their banners all over the place. At the start of Newbury, when you phoned up the enquiry line, it was answered "Third battle of Newbury, can we help you?". Now it is "Third battle, Friends of the Earth speaking".

Politics

ORGANISE! - What roles have the various Green organisations taken?

E.A - Many of the national organisations have taken part in different ways. Some of the big well known groups have donated goods and equipment to some of the smaller protests such as money, food, climbing ropes and equipment, cargo nets etc. and don't want their name used or even mentioned. They don't want their names associated with the protests, preferring that it is associated with big gimmicks to get their point across, or high class big money stunts that get them on T.V. Some of the smaller Green parties try to get their teeth into road campaigns so that they are, or seem to be, the main force behind a particular protest. They put all their banners and posters all over the place, you know the sort of thing, a take-over job really, the same sort of thing that the Socialist Workers Party do on a normal march. They give their ready made placards out to all the non politically involved people on the march, so that it looks as though the march is S.W.P oriented. To quote Green Anarchist - "Friends Of the Earth and Earth First are dead!, long live the E.L.F!"(Earth Liberation Front).

Strategy

ORGANISE! - What are people's views in the violence/non-violence debate?.

E.A. -Most of the people involved in the roads protests take the non-violent direct action approach, they are really the people who get called fluffies, a lot of them class themselves as anarchists, but pacifists. On the other hand, all the protesters who think that that when the security get heavy handed or violent - as they do sometimes - that we should have a go back and fight, self defence really, they get called spikeys. There is quite a lot of conflict between the two different groups, mostly verbal disputes, but the fluffies heavily outnumber the "let's have a go" brigade. I myself think that we are entitled to defend ourselves if the police or security attack or get heavy with us, "by any means necessary," you know, the old anarchist saying, but there isn't enough of us to get heavy at the moment, so I would say that tactically the non-violent approach is best at present. It gets more of the general public on our side, they like sit-downs, but not riots.

ORGANISE! -How are different strategies devised?

E.A - Through discussions and debate, or people have learnt different ways that are good to stop the road builders or bailiffs at other road protests. The knowledge is passed around campfires during debates at night, tree people who have learnt climbing skills, and have equipment like ropes and harnesses, teach others how to climb trees safely, and how to move around the tree defence walkways without much risk, and how to set up a tree defence network. These are very effective, especially the tunnels, people lock themselves on to props holding the roof of the tunnel up.

State

ORGANISE! - How have the authorities (Police, Bailiffs etc.) reacted to the protests, and how have the police used the C.J.A?. (Criminal Justice Act)

E.A - On most of the protests I've been on, it's been the NVDA approach, so there is little violence or hostility from the protesters. I would say because of that most of the old Bill don't get wound up, but there is always some that want to get stroppy. They make remarks about how smelly we all are, "when did you last have a bath." ? It's the same with the Sheriff's men really, some are OK with you really, some are nasty horrible bastards. I think really (that) the most grief comes from the security men, a lot of them are quite aggressive, they like to think of themselves as tough guys, and us as silly hippies. They're silly fuckers if you ask me, they only get £3.50 an hour and they have to 12 hour shifts. On some protests, evictions from buildings and tree houses, when the police get you they just walk you away from the area, search you, and ask for your name and address. Sometimes, more recently, they have used the C.J.A, if you don't leave the area you will all be nicked for criminal trespass. They used it a lot at Newbury, nicking everybody they could grab for criminal trespass, and anybody who got in the way of the diggers or chainsaw men.

ORGANISE! - What is the role of the Media, and how do activists view them?

E.A - A lot of the daily tabloids are against us: "hippy squatters, and they're all anarchist." I just wish it was all true, the bloody Old Bill wouldn't be able to move us so quick as they do. A few of the dailies are OK, give us good write ups about how we are doing it for the environment and that, but not many of them. A few of the local papers take the protesters side, because they can see what the road in question is going to do to the area. A lot of the protesters don't trust the media, photographers or reporters. There's been a lot of photos taken by freelancers, and when their photos to the papers they sell them to the police cheap, so that they get good close ups of people's faces. Some protesters like the press because they say it gets the point across, and shows that somebody is trying to do something about it, or it might bring more support from local people.

ORGANISE! - Has the response to the Authorities changed?

E.A - I do think that quite a lot of people's attitudes towards the police and authorities have changed over the last year. A lot of people who used to be fluffy, who now have seen violence from police and security at various marches, demos and evictions now think its time to be spikey and fight back. Those who have been on various campaigns and lived on the road are often fed up with all the shit the authorities throw at them all the time, its time for action not for talking about how to lay on the floor. According to certain fluffy papers this is the best way to defend certain parts of your body when getting a beating off the Old Bill. More people getting spikey is a good sign as far as I'm concerned, if attacked we should defend ourselves by any human means we have.

Future

ORGANISE! - How do you see the future of the Anti-Roads movement?

E.A - I think that as long as there as they keep on building roads there will be a movement, the hardcore protesters are right in there, the tree people and that, they all know each other, and anywhere they are trying to chop down a tree for a road, these people are going to go. Its no joke, the authorities have chopped down half of Britain's ancient woodland, just since the Second World War, 10% of Britain's landmass is covered in tarmac; 75,000 new cars hit the streets of the world every 24 hours, so its got to come to a stop at some point, or its going to be goodbye world. We've just got to get the point over to the masses, the ozone (layer) is knackered, the icecaps are melting, we have got to do something drastic. Anything that causes poisonous fumes or toxic gases to be put in the atmosphere has got to be stopped; car culture, industry, lots of things, we've got to put ourselves back a few hundred years, go back to horses and carts, electric trains, trams around the city instead of buses, pushbikes instead of cars. Viva the anti-road movement, long live anarchist communism.

RAVE NEW WORLD?

AS THE ECSTASY debate continues with the recent sensationalised Daily Mirror anti-Ecstasy campaign, and the 'All about E' Guardian discussion; the general emphasis as always, and not surprisingly , has been on the negative aspects of E - the consequences and the oft quoted statistics of between 50 and 60 casualties from E since 1988; (incidentally drink causes an estimated 28,000 fatalities in Britain per year [Melody Maker 8/6/96]). Even the so called progressive attitudes of the various drug information agencies and experts concentrate on possible harm and side effects.

But what about the positives? Are there any? Can millions of people each week be wrong? Does raving /Ecstasy have any place within revolutionary politics? Is it anti-revolutionary? How has it affected the social environment of Britain?

Social Environment

"...The turn of the decade and the pop clock begins to bring politics into fashion as organised raves and warehouse parties are busted, banned and trashed by cops throughout Britain. Just south of Leeds, the biggest mass arrest ever seen in this country...during one large outdoor rave.. the authorities are putting the scare on pop, dance music, new (different) drugs, people organising outside the established clubs.. the threatening, sexist, macho atmosphere connected to night-clubs is swamped by something new, exciting and even **joyous**..." (Chumbawamba - Showbusiness!)

As Chumbawamba suggest, the advent of raving and the accompanying use of Ecstasy has positively changed the social life of many; especially women. Nicholas Saunders, in his second work about Ecstasy, Ecstasy and The Dance Culture puts forward two possible reasons for this positive transformation. The first, a purely biological point, proposes the idea that as Ecstasy is a sexual suppressant, women are able to enjoy themselves free from sexual advances and hassle from men, "...Traditional alcohol-based events always had an undertone of trying to score sexually through flirting and small talk..."[Saunders - Ecstasy and The Dance Culture] The second, offers the idea that traditional cultural values are being rejected, "...Although many young people in the dance scene now drink and do not take ecstasy, the normal way to behave is still without small talk or sexual aggression...".

It is quite probable that both of these points are true; as a sexual suppressant, especially for men, Ecstasy focuses the users attention on other things- namely the music and dancing. The result, more often than not, is a more relaxed and friendlier atmosphere; especially for women. This atmosphere perpetrates the desire for more of the same, and this is where the rejection of traditional cultural values could be seen to come into play.

Breaking Down Barriers.

Another case in point, illustrating this combination, is that of the rave scene in northern Ireland. As the scene developed and became popular around 1994, many young people (between the ages of 14 and 20), both Protestants and Catholics, became involved. The difference between this social scene and the pre-rave culture was that they became involved together, Saunders explains further;

"...I heard rumours that the effect of young people taking Ecstasy at raves in Northern Ireland was to break down sectarian barriers. In the summer of 1994, just before the IRA ceasefire, I spent 3 days in Northern Ireland... I interviewed teenage kids at a rave event in the Catholic club with a home video camera...lots of them were keen to tell me about the friendships they had made with members of the opposite sect who, they assured me, they would never have met otherwise..."

Without wanting to suggest that years of political conflict could be solved by dance music and E, Saunders' Northern Ireland experience does illustrate the existence of the two points mentioned which could account for the change in the participants social behaviour. Aggression is gone, leading to the breaking down of barriers hence the rejection of traditional cultural values i.e. catholic only and Protestant only clubs, "...We've never known anything but hatred...It's always the same: them over on one side, you on the other, except at raves...".

Raving is not the only recreational activity where the participants have experienced behaviour changes, due to the use of Ecstacy. Although also involved in the dance/E scene, football supporters, from the 1991/92 season, showed a massive reduction in the amount of involvement they had in incidences of football violence and associated arrests. (The Independent 8/92 - a study.) Saunders cites a particular example of Manchester United and Manchester City fans, notorious for their violent clashes. He describes his experience of earlier Derby games (1989 & 1990) as being predictably violent and nothing out of the ordinary. Then he relates the first Derby game in the 1991/92 season;

"...By this time something quite remarkable had happened. Many of the hardcore lads from both United and City had spent most of the summer dancing the weekends away to the sounds of house music at raves fuelled by the drug Ecstasy. They had done this together! They had got into a routine of meeting up at rave clubs and taking Ecstasy in groups comprising both United and City lads...United's fans moved off, there were, as usual, several hundred of them. But from the vantage point of the same bridge I had stood on two seasons earlier, I could hardly believe that this group was largely made up of those same young men who had looked like they were going to war. This time they looked more like they were going to Glastonbury festival!...The match went off with hardly any trouble and afterwards United and City's lads once again danced the night away... it could never have happened before E..."

Addiction

Some critics of ecstasy have argued that although E is non-addictive, in terms of physical withdrawal symptoms, it is probable that it is psychologically addictive. This view can be given some credence as Saunders explains, "...Many European users do take Ecstasy every weekend and are psychologically dependent...".

However, he also states that, "...MDMA (Ecstasy) becomes less attractive with increased use...it's debatable whether it is the scene or the drug that they are addicted to ...". In the short time that I have been involved in the scene (approx. 14 months), I have never come across a person who I have considered to be addicted to Ecstasy. On the contrary, I have met many people who have gone weeks, months and even years without taking E. I myself have gone months at a time without taking, or feeling the need to take it.

Brave New World.

Another criticism bandied about, regarding E, is its potentiality to create a 'Brave New World'; in which people accept their lot, and all desire to fight for a better world is 'drugged' out of them. As every remotely awake and sane person will realise, we already have plenty of devices about which attempt to coerce us into such a position: cars, dishwashers, videos, CD's, houses, carpets, wallpaper, etc. the list is endless. And lets not forget all about the perfectly legal drugs which could be said to do a much better job of numbing the mind than E, such as Benzodiazepines or anti-depressants such as Prozac.

Revolutionary?

So, can raving/Ecstasy unite enemies and bring peace where there is war? Of course not. Violence and wars still exist and will always prevail, until capitalism is eradicated. Raving/E, football, drinking, rock climbing, horse racing, etc. are all temporary releases from the mundanity of our existence under capitalism. None of these activities or any other leisure pursuit is revolutionary or, for that matter, anti-revolutionary. Ravers and the rave scene are as much targets for exploitation within Capitalism as every other consumer, as Arch Stanton points out,

"...The real threat of exploitation comes once again from the proliferation of would-be shamans amongst the state-funded cohorts of drug workers and their academic hangers-on. The former can barely contain their excitement..." ['What Future For The Real Raver'-Arch Stanton - Here and Now no. 14. 1993].

So once the experience is over its back to the real world of wage slavery, poverty and desperation, and either fighting to end these afflictions of capitalism, (and hence capitalism itself) or not.

In conclusion then, to be under any illusion that E/rave culture has any revolutionary power is to be living in a world of make believe. It is one experience out of many (although one of the best experiences I have ever had) which helps us to endure our existence as best we can. It will not do away with football violence on a large scale, or work where the Northern Ireland peace talks have not; but something which gives its participants (especially women) a break from "...the threatening, sexist, macho atmosphere connected to night clubs...", and indeed most other forms of 'normalised' social interaction, is, I believe, a progression, and, as much of a liberation of the social environment as is possible in a capitalist world.

War Artists of the Class War

WE CONCLUDE OUR 3-part series on Art and Anarchism. Due to lack of space we were unable to publish this in the last issue of *Organise!* as promised. Upcoming articles will include the involvement of Surrealists with the revolutionary Anarchist movement.

The role of the revolutionary artist is to reveal the real nature of capitalist society, to attack the system that causes poverty, hunger and death; to rip aside the mask that conceals systematic corruption, heartless bureaucracy and biased laws; to remind people that they are not alone, that their individual acts of resistance can be more effective as collective action taken with other people.

One such artist is 69 year-old Carlos Cortez. His lino-cut posters attack the evils and hypocrisy of capitalism. They are fly-posted around the Chicago streets at night and provide illustrations to accompany articles in the revolutionary press. Taking the heroes of revolutionary anarchism and the quiet daily heroism of the oppressed as his themes, his art is popular and populist.

The son of a Mexican Indian, who was an organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World (the I.W.W. also known as "wobblies"), and a German socialist mother, Cortez has been a "harvest hand, construction worker, loafer, jailbird... vagabond factory stiff". He joined the I.W.W. after World War 2 and his articles, poems and illustrations have appeared in its paper, 'Industrial Worker' ever since.

'La Lucha Continua'

Cortez draws on his Mexican Indian origins and his involvement with the wobblies for his visual images. Typically these ideas came together in a woodcut entitled 'La lucha continua' ('the struggle continues'). Based on photographs of a peasant demonstration in Bolivia, Carlos added two skeletons and a pregnant woman, indicating that the struggle is something that takes in the past, present and future.

One striking woodblock poster depicts a Meztizo family, standing in front of a pyramid at the side of a stalk of maize, with the wording "Somos de la Tierra - No somos illegales" ("we are of the land - we are not illegal"). Produced to protect against the harassment of undocumented immigrants from Mexico by the U.S. immigration authorities.

"Imagine those whose ancestors came from another continent telling the natives of this continent that they do not have the right to move around in their own land. Migrating to better their economic conditions is precisely what brought the Europeans over to this hemisphere", Carlos explains. A similar point was made on a small card advertising an exhibition celebrating "500 years of Resistance" which portrays a group of American Indians laughing at a portrait of Christopher Columbus.

Central America

American imperialism in Central and South America has been a favourite target for Cortez. One poster depicts a nursing mother and child, holding the slogan: "Mirucomo trabajan tuo impuestos, CABRON!" ("look how your taxes work, cuckold"). Behind the mother and child tower skeletons in helmets

Carlos Cortez Lucia Gonzalez de Parsons, 1986

marked "Policia". This poster was designed to draw attention to the way the taxes of U.S. workers are used against workers in Central America, in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. A smaller poster depicts parents grieving over a flag-draped coffin and lists the number of U.S. soldiers killed in wars of intervention. Printed down the side is the slogan: "Draftees of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your Generals!"

One woodcut has been based on the collective experience of Guatemalan women whose husbands had 'disappeared', after being taken from their houses by armed gangs. Cortez gathered their stories together, and synthesised it into the depiction of a family house invaded by a death squad, a masked informer points the woman's husband out to the killers.

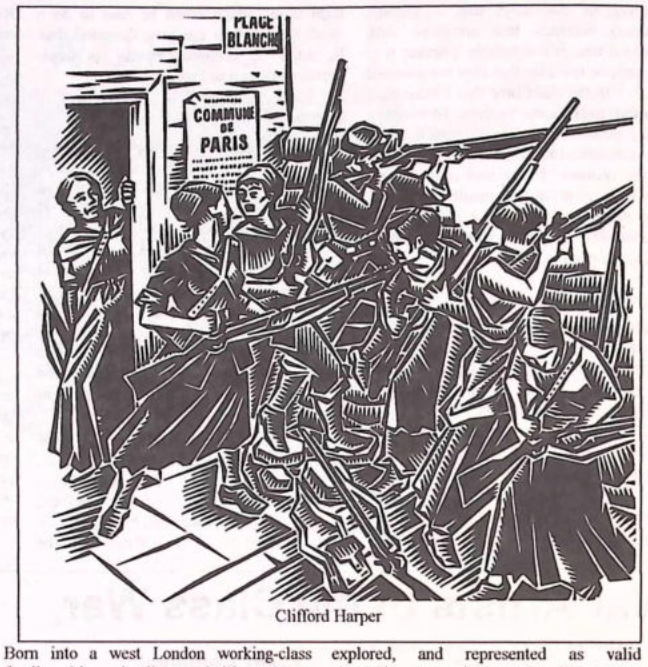
Living in Chicago, Carlos is active with the Movimento Artistico Chicano (MARCH). One poster printed for MARCH is of the 19th century Mexican engraver Jose Guadalupe Posada, embraced by one of the calaveras (animated skeletons) for which he was famous. Mexican artistic influences shape Cortez's work and the striking black and white images recall those of the revolutionary Mexican artists grouped around the paper El Machete.

Resistance and Community

The depiction of Posada is one of many portrait posters, which include the legendary song-writer and wobbly agitator Joe Hill, the Mexican anarchist-communist, Ricardo Flores Magon, and Lucy Parsons, a former slave, who dedicated her whole life to revolutionary action. In all these portraits Cortez combines image and text, and the subject gazes out with a direct honesty which confronts the viewer.

In Britain the artist most closely identified with anarchism is Clifford Harper. An illustrator whose work frequently appears in the national press, Harper's graphics have celebrated resistance and community, providing a critique of all that is wrong with capitalism, attacking all forms of authoritarianism and projecting a utopian vision of possible alternatives.

Clifford Harper



Clifford Harper

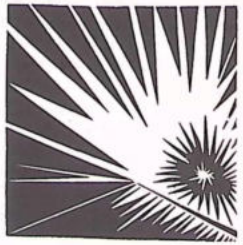
Born into a west London working-class family, his schoolboy rebelliousness - truancy, expulsion and petty crime - grew into involvement with the sixties counter-culture and increasing political awareness. This included a period of living in a commune which provided glimpses of life's potential - a potential described in one of his first major works 'Class War Comix' and a frequently reprinted series of illustrations commissioned for 'Radical Technology', which presented utopian ideas in a practical early obtainable manner - terraced houses with collectivised gardens, community workshops and medical centres in which the sexual division of labour had been transformed. These visions were contrasted with the reality of capitalism portrayed in Patriarch Street Scene.

Stirring Depiction

The idea that anarchism *is* realistic, *is* attainable, that its many strands make a vibrant alternative to capitalism was reinforced by the cover of a 1976 catalogue for Compendium Bookshop, which featured pictures of windmills, waterfalls working and demonstrating women alongside some of the historical figures of anarchism.

It is also the theme which runs through 'Anarchy; a Graphic Guide', which was published in 1987. This was written and illustrated by Harper, and provides one of the best introductions to the ideas of anarchism. All the variants of anarchism are explored, and represented as valid alternatives to capitalism. The illustrations draw on the various styles and artists connected with anarchism in the past, Farns Masereel being one obvious example. He also uses the traditional iconography of anarchism: Light, chains, hammers, prison bars, flags, crowds and barricades all reinforce the ideas explained in the text. In chapter 4 an explanation of the Paris Commune is accompanied by a stirring depiction of women in assertive and revolutionary roles.

Much of Harper's graphic work celebrates resistance. On of his most effective works was the black and white cartoon-strip tribute to Jim Heather-Hayes, the young anarchist poet who committed suicide in Ashford prison after serving four months in solitary confinement for fire-bombing a London police station in 1982. The cartoon-strip is a format he frequently uses,



Clifford Harper

sometimes to illustrate poems, such as Seigfried Sassoon's anti-war poem 'Fight to a Finish', in which the returning soldiers turn on the press before driving the "butchers out of Parliament".

Rebellious Spirit

Harper's recent work includes the illustration and design of 'Visions of Poetry' an anthology of 20th century anarchist poetry, which he also helped edit. This and a slimmer volume published at the same time, the 'Prolegomena to a study of the Return of the Repressed in History' are skilfully designed and crafted, with text and illustration working together in harmony. The illustrations of the 'Prolegomena' stand in the edge of abstraction, yet provide the perfect foil for the bitter denunciations of authority found in the text.

In stark contrast to this move towards the semi-abstract are his series of picture-card portraits of 36 anarchists, men and women who have dreamed of a different way of life, including Emiliano Zapata, the Chinese writer Ba Jin and John Cage, the musician. Harper's work has been diverse, and he has illustrated book jackets, LP covers, magazine articles, but his best work has often been that which has related to a particular struggle, such as the poll-tax rebellion. His image of angry peasants captured the rebellious spirit of the mass of ordinary people, and linked it to similar revolts of the past. Little wonder that his particular image was reprinted again and again.

Cortez and Harper live on separate continents, yet both are united in their opposition to capitalism by a determination to document the class war as it happens - in doing so they have created art with greater meaning, relevance and *engagement* than all the arid portraits and landscapes that fill the gallery walls.

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS

Insumisos

Since 1989 hundreds of people have been imprisoned annually in Spain for insumision, total resistance to military and alternative service. The normal sentence is 2 years, 4 months, 1 day. The policy of resisting all service was meant as a direct challenge against the state's military machine. It has been particularly strongly supported in Euskadi (the Basque country).

However, in 1996, all this will change. Insumision will no longer be a personable offence. Spain's 'socialist' government, clearly embarrassed at having it's prisons stuffed full of insumisos (total resisters), have changed the law. The new punishment for insumision is to be 'disqualification', for between eight and fourteen years. This means that anyone found guilty of insumision will be deprived of the right to receive aid from public funds. This includes financial help for housing, to study, or to cope with unemployment. They will also not be allowed to get jobs that are in any way connected to public administration, such as health, education, transport and so on.

Insumisos may well be faced with extreme hardship under this new law. It will also have the effect of reducing the visibility of the resistance to the military, so making it easier to carry out repression and break the spirits of those that would resist the state.

It remains to be seen how the insumisos respond. One possibility is to join the armed forces and then refuse, as this means imprisonment under military law. What is obvious though, is that such a repressive law must be resisted through mass direct action and the support of those found guilty under the new law.

Anti-Fascist Jailed

Pavel Kroupa, a Czech anti-fascist activist has been charged with murder, and jailed. In March, he was on a bus in Prague when he was attacked by five Nazi skinheads. Pavel defended himself and consequently one Nazi died. Czech comrades are appealing for financial support and benefits to help pay for Pavel's defence. If found guilty he could face life in prison. Support should be sent to:-

Ivana Vranova, Bohunicka 19, 60 000 Brno, Czech republic. Tel 09425-339895 (ask for Borek). Alternatively, any donations sent to the ACF (see address below) will be passed on.

Harold H. Thompson

Harold is an anarchist imprisoned in the USA. In 1979 he was arrested in Chattanoooga, Tennessee, for allegedly shooting to death a police informant / killer convicted of murdering the mother of Harold's son, who then threatened his son while out on appeal bond. He was also charged with expropriating money for political activities, from a jewellery store. He was sentenced to life plus 50 years. He was then given an additional 21-75 years for a second shooting incident in Cleveland, Ohio.

Following a failed armed escape from an East Tennessee prison, from November 1986 Harold spent 5 years, 4 months in maximum security / solitary confinement. he also received an additional sentence of 32 years as a result of charges from this incident.

In July 1993, having been out of solitary for 15 months without a single disciplinary infraction report, he was framed for "in all likelihood having possible escape plans" based on "outside confidential information". He was returned to maximum security / solitary confinement where he remained until march 1995. In June 1995, Harold was again reclassified to a lower security, but had to wait 8 months before being transferred to the Turney Centre Industrial Prison, where he is now.

As well as being an anarchist, Harold is also a jailhouse lawyer. This involves him drafting legal briefs for submission to courts for appellate documents, or filing civil rights complaints on behalf of other prisoners. His activities have earned him recurrent harassment, but he remains resolute and continues to work for what he believes in.

We would urge people to write to Harold or sent messages of support, and also add his name to the mailing list of any publications you are involved with.

For further information, leaflets, etc. write to:

Harold Thompson support Campaign, Huddersfield ABC, c/o 17-21 Chapel Street, BRADFORD, BD1 5DT

Write to

Harold H. Thompson #93992, Turney Centre Industrial Prison, Route 1, Unit 4~a~25, ONLY, TN37140-9709, USA

Frame-up

Oliver Campbell is currently serving a life sentence for the murder of a shopkeeper which occurred during an armed robbery of an off licence and supermarket. He has continually protested his innocence.

The evidence centred around a black 'British Knights' baseball cap which witnesses said the gunman was wearing (two people were involved in the robbery). A sports shop worker told police that Oliver had recently bought such a hat, and he was arrested on this basis. The hat had, however, been stolen some weeks earlier outside a night-club. An identical hat was found in the vicinity of the robbery by police, but hair found on it did not match that of Oliver's. In fact there was no forensic evidence against Oliver whatsoever.

In addition to this Oliver was questioned by police on numerous occasions without his lawyer being present, despite police having agreed to call his solicitor if any questioning was to take place. A psychologist at his appeal stated that she thought that the police had put undue pressure on Oliver to force a confession out of him, as he is considered to have severe learning difficulties and confessed merely to stop his harassment.

Added to all this, his co-defendant pleaded guilty to conspiracy to rob (for which he received a 5 year sentence) and named another person who he said was involved in the robbery. Police however, did not even bother to pursue this line of enquiry, presumably, because it did not fit into their theory! Oliver is significantly taller than any of the witnesses stated the attacker was. He is also, much younger. He was totally unable to explain the history of the gun used, or where he had disposed of it. In the end, the only evidence against him is a confession which was given while under severe mental stress! Incredibly (or not, if you know anything of British justice!) his appeal, which took three and an half years even to happen, was rejected despite the total lack of evidence.

For more information on this case contact:-

Justice for Oliver Campbell Campaign PO Box 6580, LONDON, E6 3TL.

Send messages of support to :-

Oliver Campbell MV3344, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, LONDON W12 0EA

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Green Politics

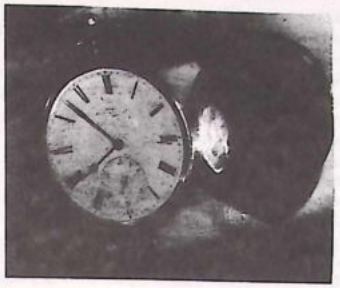
Continued from back page

green current claiming to be anarchist, that is the anarcho-primitivists. The anarcho-primitivist position basically holds that an non-hierarchical society is impossible whilst any form of industrial civilisation remains and that, therefore, talk of a liberatory technology is nonsense. Whilst many writings from the anarcho-primitivist 'movement' (it is a far from homogenous entity) are an excellent counter-balance to technophile arguments coming from various sources (including 'revolutionary') their overall perspective lacks any revolutionary dynamic and often betrays a confused misanthropic idealist fanaticism at odds with authentic anarchism.

Towards a Green Libertarian Communism

Any would-be revolutionary movement today cannot ignore the necessity of developing a 'green' perspective. But this does not mean simply tagging on a few eco-friendly ideas to an otherwise concrete grey politics. It entails an active engagement with specifically anti-capitalist forces within the green movement. It means presenting a class struggle anarchist analysis of the present struggles against environmental destruction to those involved, to those effected. The struggles against the roads, for just one example, are implicitly *class* struggles as they challenge not merely present government policy but capitalist logic itself, the logic (and necessity!) for expansion.

Likewise, when the greens talk about 'zero growth' anarchist and libertarian communists must point out the explicitly communist nature of this idea. Equally, the latter must attempt to understand the implications of their politics for the environment (in the broadest sense). Already a dynamic is appearing as the limitations of traditional politics are becoming increasingly exposed as the world and its inhabitants face the choice of a new society or slow annihilation. If the historical choice has been between socialism or barbarism it is now between green libertarian communism and a barbaric death in clouds of toxic fumes.



FINDING TIME: ONE STEP BEYOND THE TYRANNY OF WORK. *Norman Jope. 16pp. £1. Memes Press. Available from 38 Molesworth Road, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 4NT.*

This pamphlet comes at a time when the struggle against the Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) is beginning to hot up. Indeed, this piece of legislation, the compulsive nature of which is written into its very name, symbolises the question around which Finding time revolves: how our time is spent (or rather, squandered) in the service of the market.

Workhouse

Jope begins by noting how 70s talk of the Leisure Society has been abandoned. On one hand, there are many now who work excessively long hours and/or do unpaid overtime: in 1992, 15% of British workers toiled for 48 hours or more per week. On the other, for the millions unemployed, their rights to any kind of income or to go into a job of their choosing have been increasingly eroded and restricted. The JSA exemplifies this. In 1979, leaving a job "without just cause" meant that benefit would be suspended for 6 weeks. The JSA provides for such suspension lasting up to 6 months.

The contrast with the 60s and 70s, or even those still relatively liberal countries like Denmark, is blamed squarely on deliberate policy rather than untameable market forces. Unsurprisingly, the aim of this policy has been to boost profits. It has had three facets: the creation of mass unemployment, for example through privatisation of State-owned industries, the weakening of union rights and power, aided by the first factor; and an increasingly stringent benefits regime.

These changes have had profound effects on the psychological climate as well. Indeed, changing attitudes, such as that of expecting to have "a job for life", has been an avowed aim of free market ideologists like the Tories. What this has actually meant is the creation of an atmosphere of insecurity and stress running through the lives of the working class, whether in "permanent" or temporary employment, or struggling on the dole. thus the basis for resistance is undercut by the fear of falling through each successive level.

Beyond Leisure

Jope goes on to ask fundamental but often neglected questions as to what kinds of work (and how much of it) we actually need done, and what could be eliminated. As he points out, most people *want* to engage in purposeful and enjoyable activity. Even the "leisure Society" would be a misnomer for one in which the work/leisure divide had thus been abolished as a result of the overthrow of the capitalist economy. But whether "work" or "leisure", the common denominator is time: our present lack of control over it and our need to gain such control in order to have a free, humane society.

As things stand, those who demonstrate a certain freedom in their lives, like New Age Travellers for example, tend to be reviled. It's suggested that this is partly through envy of the contrast they present to lives of "working and shopping". However, the travellers' importance in this context is only a symbol of escape from the global market and the State- much more is needed for the transformation of a society which, as Jope shows, demoralises and exhausts the majority.

It is in his examination of the means by which changes might be brought about that anarchists will find most to question. Though the pamphlet has strong libertarian and egalitarian elements (e.g. advocating the active unity of the employed and unemployed) there is a tendency towards reformism in this last part of the discussion. For example, making the Jobseekers Allowance payable at its full rate in any period of unemployment, and creating a legal offence of "industrial coercion" with the aim of "constraining exploitative employers". But as well as recognising the improbability of the current Opposition pursuing these aims, Jope stresses that they are not advocated as end in themselves. Rather, they would be to excite the desire for more freedom and shift the consensus of today's unquestionably diminished hopes, which regard the market and the State as eternal. What anarchists deny is the idea that this system can be infinitely reformed, to the point where true freedom and justice exist. but reforms are useful insofar as they show that change is possible, and employ methods that build general confidence and this, I think, is the intended message.

In the end, the chief value of Finding Time is the attempt to tackle some basic questions of human purpose, rather than its tentative solutions. This is done very successfully, in a clear, informative and thoughtful style. Find the time to read it.

To document further developments with the JSA, and to assist the resistance to it, a newsletter called the Clock Stops Here is also available. Send an SAE to the same address as for Finding Time.

SOCIAL ANARCHISM OR LIFESTYLIST ANARCHISM. AN UNBRIDGEABLE CHASM. *Murray Bookchin. 86 pages. AK Press. £5.95*

As Bookchin himself says "Stated bluntly: Between the socialist pedigree of anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho communism...and the basically liberal, individualistic pedigree of lifestyle anarchism... there exists a divide that cannot be bridged unless we completely disregard the profoundly different goals, methods, and underlying philosophy that distinguish them." In this blistering attack on lifestylism, individualism and primitivism, this veteran of the libertarian movement pulls out all the stops. His constant affirmation of the revolutionary, social and collective core of Anarchism throughout this booklet warms the cockles of the heart of any Anarchist Communist worth their salt. Bookchin seems concerned that this revolutionary core is being eroded to the point where the word anarchy will become part of the chic bourgeois vocabulary of the coming century naughty, rebellious, insouciant but deliciously safe. This pessimism is not borne out by a look at the facts. Bookchin appears to be referring to the Anglo-Saxon Anarchist scene, although he seems to believe this process is also going on in for, example, the Latin countries. Now admittedly the so-called Anarchist movement in the United States and Canada is diabolical. This reviewer remembers well the American and Canadian "Anarchists" who turned up to the Trieste International Anarchist conference who sickened many East and West European comrades there, not to mention those who turned up for the Class War International event. But even so there do exist groups and individuals on the other side of the Atlantic who do profess some kind of class - struggle anarchism. Shouldn't Bookchin bear this in mind and make reference to them as a counter-weight to the individualists and lifestylists he

describes? Similarly, Bookchin seems remarkably ignorant of the Anarchist movement in Ireland and Britain. Is he not aware that the majority of Irish Anarchists hold class struggle views, as does the Scottish Anarchist Federation. Is he not conscious of the fact that the number of class struggle anarchists in England and Wales have increased dramatically in the last 2 decades? Why no reference to any of the organisations and papers that espouse such views? And what about the movement in the rest of Europe? It would be preposterous to regard it as predominantly lifestylist!

Alternative

Nevertheless this pamphlet is a welcome addition to the arguments in favour of what Bookchin defines as social anarchism and against the latter day individualism which he believes started taking hold with the defeat of the 60s counter-culture. He notes: " No less than Marxism and other socialisms, anarchism can be profoundly influenced by the bourgeois environment it professes to oppose, with the result that the growing "inwardness" and narcissism of the yuppie generation have left their mark upon many avowed radicals. Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of postmodernism, celebrations of theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organisational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction has taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades".

Now, Bookchin was involved in various attempts at radicalising the counter-culture in the 60s, to his credit. But perhaps his involvement has made him a mite indulgent Whilst admitting the counter-culture's "shortcomings" he fails to say what they are. Certainly individualism and self-centred pursuit of pleasure can be discovered to a lesser or greater extent in the sayings of counter-cultural figureheads like Timothy Leary, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. The impact of decades of reaction since then should not obscure the fact that these tendencies were already there and that little attempt was made to counterpose a class struggle perspective.

Bookchin, in his often brilliant diatribes against the Primitivists, fails to emphasise the other side of the coin. Productivism, production for production's sake, one of the chief maxims of capitalism, is one of the mechanisms that the Primitivists, no matter how wrong-headedly and in such a mistaken way, are rebelling against. In castigating the anti-technology and anti-civilisation stances of Primitivism, one feels that Bookchin errs too much in the other direction. Certainly he fails to sufficiently address himself to the problem of unbridled Production. Similarly , whilst agreeing with his denunciation of the anti-civilisation poses- and indeed poses are what they often are- of the primitivists, Bookchin fails to emphasis what this reviewer feels is of utmost importance. The primitivists have substituted the Civilisation of the last few thousand years with a call for the destruction of Civilisation. Well, I go along with them on this. Except that I want to substitute a new Civilisation, based on values nurtured in the libertarian movement and starting to develop now with a culture of resistance, not the end of civilisation per se. Bookchin fails to explain that a future society would mean a new Civilisation, transcending, and indeed destroying this one.

Democracy

Bookchin vaunts democracy as "not antithetical to anarchism". But we in the ACF feel that this ambiguous term, so often used to mobilise the masses to go to war for capitalism and the State and to counter the Western Powers' struggle with the Soviet bloc, cannot be used without confusion. Some of Bookchin's "disciples" have used his call for "libertarian municipalism" to run as candidates for City Council elections. Indeed in Canada, some of these "disciples" have run on "libertarian" tickets for Quebec nationalism. Now, Bookchin, has vigorously denounced nationalism and support for "National liberation" in this book, and the views of his "disciples" should not be mistaken for his own. But he really needs to clarify just what he means by his slogan "Democratise the republic, radicalise the democracy". Is he in favour of "libertarian municipalism " of the sort where "libertarians" capture the local State (and end up being captured by it)? As he states, he has lost the view that the working class is the revolutionary subject of history, that is, that it is destined to bring about the radical overthrow of capitalism. In doing so, he appears to have dug himself into the hole of libertarian municipalism, out of which it seems difficult for him to get out.

Despite these criticisms, this booklet is well worth reading for arguments against the erroneous ideas of Stirner and Nietzsche. Indeed, Bookchin quite correctly points out that Emma Goldman, despite avowing an anarcho communist ideology, was a Nietzschean "cheek to jowl in spirit with individualists". His brisk attacks on the likes of L. Susan Brown, Hakim Bey, George Bradford and John Zerzan should be read by all serious Anarchists who are looking for a coherent revolutionary answer to the confusion of these thinkers.

Letters

Dear *Organise!*

Mayday was extra special in Sheffield this year, because it also marked the opening of the brand new "Red and Black Centre" here.

It was only a couple of months ago that we decided to look for premises to set up a place for meetings, bookstall and infoshop, creche, cafe etc. Things moved fast. We all made monthly pledges of what we felt we each could afford. We found a space that we could afford to rent, and moved in just after Easter. Since that time, various members of the Sheffield Anarchist Group, Sheffield Solidarity Federation and others, have been working hard to get the place ready for a 1st May opening (the place was a bit of a tip to start with).

Well, we did it, and the centre had it's grand opening On May 1st 1996. It was a big success. The centre looked great, after all the efforts of the group, with anarchist banners and posters from Sheffield and all over the world. About 60 people came, including members of the Leeds Anarchist group and some from Bradford. We heard talks on the origins of Mayday, on What is Anarchism, and on the centre itself. There was also an bookstall, an exhibition about the Spanish Revolution and a bar. We drank, ate and socialised until late.

This was only the first of a series of events to mark the opening of the centre. On Thursday we showed some videos, including the famous Poll Tax Riot, featuring the Sheffield Anarchists among many others! On Friday, there was Anarchist Bingo and an Anarchist Quiz, courtesy of the Leeds Anarchist Group. On Saturday, we held an anarchist bookfair in the afternoon followed by an evening of music, and socialising. Finally, on Sunday, we all met for a picnic in Endcliffe park.

We are planning more events for the future. We will keep you informed!

THE SHEFFIELD RED AND BLACK CENTRE
Wharncliffe Works
Green Lane
Sheffield
For more information, contact:
Sheffield Anarchist Group
PO Box 446
Sheffield S1 1NY

ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals. All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them.. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all). Deadlines for next issue are 14th September for features/reviews, and 21st September for letters/news.All contributions for the next issue should be sent to:ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Press Fund

Press Appeal. £100 from Nottingham; £20 from S.London;
Keep up the good work and lets make sure *Organise!* is still fighting strong in ten years from now.You can send cheques, Pos, IMOs(made out to ACF) stamps etc. You can even send us a standing order to our account(write to London address for details). All donations to London address.

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Articles from *Organise!* can now be found on the internet.
NOTE -Change of Address: http://burn.vcsd.edu /~acf. You can email us on: an47851@anon.penet.fi. All e-mail to the ACF is relayed via an 'anonymous server' in Finland (note, this is not run by the ACF).
When you e-mail us, the server will automatically allocate you your own anonymous address which you can then use whenever you want to e-mail us again in the future. If you want to know more about this, you can send a message to help@anon.penet.fi and the information will be e-mailed back to you.

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Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle Anarchists. For contacts :
Across Britain, and London and surrounding region: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street London E1 7QX
Scotland: PO BOX 5754 (don't mention ACF) Elgin, Scotland, IV 30 2ZD
For Merseyside and region: Merseyside ACF, PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP
For Brighton (and contacts in Bognor and Hastings) Brighton ACF,c/o Unemployed Centre,Tilbury Place, Brighton. East Sussex.
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☐ I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
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Green Politics

IT CAN BE argued that the logical consequence of libertarian communist thought has always been the creation of a 'green' society since it has always posited the need for the destruction of capitalism, the system which, as we know, must expand or die and which has given birth to the ideologies of productivism and consumerism.

Anarchist and libertarian communist thinkers in the early days of the revolutionary working class movement, in their criticism of the 'modern' industrial system and its tendency to transform the worker into a part of the machinery, can be seen as proto-greens. But it would, however, be stretching things to say that the early anarchist movement was anything like a consciously 'green' movement, despite the critical contribution of people like Elisee Reclus, William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Peter Kropotkin. Whilst all of the above writers produced work that contained, 'green' implications or at least sentiment, none can be seriously considered as systematically 'green' thinkers. What can be argued is that the communist vision of people like Morris and Kropotkin, that of a decentralised society of integrated labour in humanised environments, stands in stark contrast to many 'socialists' (beginning with some of the 'utopian' socialists but scientificised by Marx) who considered (and still consider) the Factory as a model for the new society.

Socialist Productivism

Such thinking found its realisation in the rapid industrialisation under state capitalism in the Soviet Union, which although bound to do so by its need to compete in world markets, found a perfect ideological support in the (generally unchallenged) belief amongst socialists that the industrialisation of the world was an 'historical necessity'. It is no coincidence that some of the most horrendous environmental destruction has been carried out under the banner of socialism! Unfortunately, anarchists have not been exempt from holding an uncritical attitude towards industrial 'civilisation'.

Whilst it would be unusual to find any outright glorification of the modern factory amongst anarchists, undoubtedly from reading anarcho-syndicalist literature from the end of the last century, right up until quite recently, the impression is given that technology is not up for criticism and, disturbingly, that little life takes place outside of the factory. Anarchist communists haven't been much better in this respect. Why is that? Obviously, anarchists and libertarian communists are products of their times and the level of environmental destruction at the time of the first mass anarchist movements was by no means as apparent as it has been in the period since World War Two. Whilst revolutionaries argued that capitalism was destroying the worker and peasant, body and soul, it was not so obvious that capital was in the process of destroying the earth on which both worker and peasant stood. Neither was it possible to foresee that capital would develop the capacity to annihilate all life on the planet in the space of a few weeks or less with the aid of nuclear fission. The consciously 'green' movements which paralleled the great workers movements were generally mystical, often reactionary 'middle-class' type-movements, sometimes strongly Malthusian and racist and rarely identified with the existing 'progressive' social movements.

The Green 'Revolution'

Yet today much of the green movement claims to hold much in common with 'anarchism'. Even some of the most reformist elements in the green movement, from time to time, feel obliged to make noises about non-hierarchical organisation, devolved decision-making and other things historically identified with anarchist politics. Amongst large numbers of the direct-action orientated green activists, 'anarchist' sentiment is strong, though often very unfocused, and there is contempt for traditional forms of politics. There is also alienation from the traditional focus of anarchism, the class struggle. Often the working class are identified with the 'culture of industry' and, understandably, the notion of class solidarity is easily lost on, for example, road protesters (often unemployed) whose regular contact with their class brothers and sisters is in the form of £2.50 an hour rent-a-cop security guards!

Social Ecology

The anarchist movement itself has been forced to take on board explicitly green politics, has had to confront the issue of productivism and has had to seriously discuss the nature of technology. Perhaps the first libertarian communist writer to comprehensively address the question of the ecological crisis and its solution has been Murray Bookchin. Indeed, Bookchin can be counted amongst the first theorists of the modern ecology movement itself, with books like 'Our Synthetic Environment' (1962) and 'Crisis in our Cities' (1965) setting the agenda for what would later be known as Social Ecology. Whilst using the anarchist critique of hierarchical power and the relationship between means and ends as a starting point.

Bookchin has developed a political perspective that has had a considerable impact upon, particularly, the North American green movement. His popularity amongst US and Canadian greens has been bolstered by his argument that the 'traditional' focus of revolutionary attention (whether Marxist, Anarcho-syndicalist or Anarchist Communist), the struggle of the working class, is no longer central to the revolutionary project. His belief that the key to social revolution lay in the development of oppositional lifestyles and the 'new' social movements (feminist, anti-nuclear, anti-racist etc.) has recently been revised to some extent. Social Ecological thought, which sees the potential for a *liberatory* technology (liberated from its present owners) in a future ecological libertarian society has come into conflict with another

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ORGANISE!

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No.46 SUMMER 1997

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MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

Aims and Principles

1 The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class.

The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.).

Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce.

The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow.

Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Editorial

Labour's massive electoral victory points not to coming militancy in the workplace and on the streets in the immediate future, but to a period of quiet in which the new Labour government will be able to carry out attacks on the working class more easily than the Tories had done. They still have the backing of large sections of the boss class, are seen as "having a clear mandate", are still supported by large sections of the media and are establishing an increasingly authoritarian rule, both through government and inside their own party.

They are most likely to meet opposition from three main groups: the anti-roads movement, as Labour appears to be continuing with some of the Conservative road-building programme; from workers in education, in both schools and further education colleges where attacks on conditions and jobs will continue, and in the public sector generally, both as a result of wage freezes and the possible imposition of restraints on industrial action. The simmering discontent in the inner cities among the poor and unemployed may also be flashpoints in the near future.

As we have repeatedly said, the opportunities for the growth of revolutionary anarchism are the best for some considerable time. The disorientation and collapse of the Left, whether Labour Left, Trotskyist or Stalinist, and the increasing irrelevance of the Green Party, And yet among British revolutionary anarchists there is disorientation, a clinging to localism and indeed voluntary isolation among some. For our part, we will continue to argue for united activity and propaganda and greater co-ordination where possible, whilst remaining convinced of the need to create a mass movement for revolutionary change, alongside the creation of a specific anarchist communist organisation with a clear manifesto and programme.

New Labour-Same Old Danger!

They're having a laugh... at our expense!

THE LANDSLIDE LABOUR victory had the backing of large sections of the ruling class via the media, with the notable support of the *Sun* and the *London Evening Standard*. Indeed, the proprietor of that last newspaper, Lord Rothermere, whose two national dailies the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* continued support for the Tories signalled his approval by moving over to the Labour benches in the House of Lords. Explaining his move, Rothermere volunteered the information that Labour "were carrying out many of the policies I believe in". What he means is that Labour supports a pro-Europe line, as well as being favourable towards supporting small businesses, giving independence to the Bank of England and creating a regulatory body for financial services. Firming up this support for Labour, the *Mail* came out in praise of Blair and his Foreign Secretary the day after Rothermere's move to Labour benches.

This highlights the splits in ruling class ranks over Europe. Some continue to look towards anti-Europe positions and continued go-it-alone stances. This translates as close co-operation with the United States. However, whilst the USA administration is aware of the dangers of Europe as a rival power bloc, they are also fully conscious of the role the European Union can perform in policing the whole of Europe and pushing through austerity measures necessary for capitalism on a world scale. They would prefer to exercise their influence on the European bloc through their new ally in Britain, Tony Blair.

It is in this context that valuable support from sections of the boss class showed itself in increased financial support, media backing, and indeed in votes. Growing numbers of tax investment advisors, for example the firms of Arthur Andersen, Coopers and Lybrand, Binder Hamlyn, told investors that a Labour government might be good for their financial health. The increased support in the City for Labour had a knock-on effect as advice was handed on to stockholders and investors.

There are other reasons for such support besides a pro-Europe position from Labour. There is anxiety that the constitutional structure of Britain is creaking and antiquated and does not fully serve British capitalism's needs. There is fear over the break-up of the United Kingdom. There is an awareness that many people are disillusioned in Parliament and Democracy, particularly over the snowballing revelations of sleaze and corruption. It is felt by some in the British boss class that the Irish problem has to be resolved, and that a fix-up could not be effectively carried out by the Conservatives who were too much in pawn to the Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Streamline

Labour will move to streamline certain constitutional processes with the enthusiastic backing of liberals in the media and the intelligentsia organised through Charter 88. It will head off separation moves by nationalists with its sops of a Scottish referendum and devolution for Wales and Scotland. Through its well-publicised stands against sleaze and corruption it will hope to head off disillusion, even though its reputation for corruption in particular in municipal councils is notorious. With a massive majority it will be ruthless in driving through austerity programmes, cuts in jobs and welfare, continuing attacks on the health service and public transport, further bolstering of police powers. The Labour Party has actively sought the support of the police in its law and order campaigns. This will be eased by a majority that the Conservatives no longer had.

The unions of course will play their role in policing Labour's New Britain. Already John Monks, TUC general secretary, has met with Prime Minister Blair and talked about a "substantially changed mood in Whitehall". Another sign of better union-boss link-up was the planned visit of CBI director general Adair Turner to this year's TUC conference.

The vote in the general election itself has to be looked at. First of all, it has to be stated strongly that the Labour victory was not so much because of increased support for Labour, but because of an anti-Tory vote. There was a perception among many that the Conservatives must be voted out. This was a cross-class phenomenon, more noticeable among sections of the ruling class and "professionals" than among the working class. There were also many abstentions by many who had previously voted Conservative. On the other hand, in some working class areas, in particular in north east England, the number of abstentions shot up drastically.

Commentators in the bourgeois press recognised the anti-Tory, rather than pro-Labour significance of the vote. The turnout of voters for the election was a post-war low. It can be said that the election was notable for the high level of working class apathy and suspicion, and indeed hostility, among the working class, and the anti-Tory abstentions and tactical voting.

Cosmetic

Labour will carry out a number of cosmetic changes to give the illusion that it is a government of action, indeed that it is a government that is pro-working class. So we have an authorised investigation into the Gulf War syndrome, a moratorium on the closure of London hospitals for six months, various moves on the minimum wage etc. Within a short space of time these cosmetic changes will be eclipsed by the attacks that Labour is planning on us.

This should not be seen as a "crisis of expectations" scenario which many on the Left are putting forward. There are no heightened illusions in Labour soon to be disappointed leading to rising militancy. There are no expectations in Labour to carry out radical reforms in favour of the working class. The working class at the moment is in a period of profound defeat. Struggles will only happen when we fight back against planned attacks. At the moment the period of quiet, of class peace, can be seen as lasting a long time. The only signs of hope are to be seen in the action of BA workers and of continuing wildcats among postal workers. There will be a continuing and slowly increasing, we hope, guerrilla warfare of unofficial strikes, more and more outside the control of the unions. As regards activity on the environmental front, Labour may well make moves to buy off some of those involved with various sops, whilst some may be increasingly radicalised as they realise that the Labour agenda on the environment is not significantly different from that of the Tories.

ACF On Tour in Europe!

ACF COMRADES FROM London and Woking attended the large Euromarch on June 14th in Amsterdam. The organisers of the march -unemployed organisations, trade unions etc. with an input from Greens, Trotskyists and social-democrats- put forward reformist slogans around full employment and workers' rights, the protection of welfare provision, and talked about "basic human rights" and "the focus of a much wider campaign to stir the trade union movement in defence of the welfare state". Labour lefts like Benn backed the appeal. However, there was a large presence at the 80, 000 strong march, of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, all of whom attempted to get over an anti-capitalist and revolutionary message. ACFers were pleased to meet comrades of the Dutch ACF, who have translated many articles from *Organise!* into Dutch for their paper Woorden van rebellen. We marched with these comrades behind a banner we had brought from Britain and distributed a leaflet in English advancing a clear revolutionary message. There were sizeable contingents of Dutch, Danish and German autonomists whilst the spectacular resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism in Europe was witnessed by the seas of red and black flags in the contingents of the French CNT, the Spanish CGT,the Italian USI and the Swedish SAC, which numbered several thousands. Also present were Greek anarchists behind their black banner, as well as Belgian, German, Norwegian, Slovenian and Japanese anarchists.

Kinky sects

Whilst the European-wide continued presence of the Communist Parties, either in fundamentalist Stalinist mode, or mutated (see if you can tell the difference between us and social-democratic parties) mode was noticeable, the Trotskyists were strikingly thin on the ground, with only the French Ligue Communiste

Revolutionnaire showing any noticeable presence, with a sprinkling of Trots from various British sects. The French 'alternative' union structures, the SUD, organised outside the main union centrals, around railworkers, postal workers and those working in education, were also present, in paricular a sizeable railworkers contingent. The Belgian Renault workers in struggle against mass sackings also formed a large bloc. The Dutch police carried out a number of provocations during the event. At the Central Station they seized a red and black flag, saying it was "forbidden to be anarchist during the summit". When a bank's windows were smashed by autonomists in the demonstration, the police attacked. A little later, a well-organised provocation was carried out. An empty police van was left out in the path of the demonstration, whilst some police occupied a building nearby, training cameras on the van, whilst passing themselves off as demonstrators by waving flags and blowing whistles. Some autonomists in the crowd respond by overturning the van and were captured on camera. The police made several baton charges, concentrating on the heads of demonstrators. They blocked 3,000 Italians arriving at the Central station. The majority of these were not released until well after the demonstration had reached its final assembly point. 200 were arrested, handcuffed, held in a prison in Amsterdam and later that night returned in a train to Italy through Germany. This seems to have been a concerted action between German and Dutch police.

Joint Action

During demonstrations on the following three days the riot police made further baton charges. As a result of all these actions, as well as the police attack on the anarcho-punk Days of Chaos event on the Friday, 609 arrests were made. This does not include the Italian action. Few of these, it seems, have been charged. The severe security measures appear to have been thought out in advance, and the blanket arrest tactic used to paralyse actions, and to gather information on those arrested. This is a taste of what Europol plans for us in the future.

Whilst the ruling class is organising through the European Union to carry out attacks on us through sackings, cuts on welfare benefits and general austerity programmes, this demonstration was very important in that large numbers of anarchists marched together on a European level for the first time. It points towards the resurgence of anarchism in Europe and towards further joint actions.

AUSTRIAN STATE ATTACKS ANARCHISTS

ALL OVER EUROPE anarchists and other radical left activists are being persecuted and criminalized by state authorities. In countries like Germany this sort of repression already has traditional status (RAF, Revolutionäre Zellen, Bewegung 2. Juni, radikal...). Recently other countries started using invented criminal acts in order to shine through the anarchist movement and structures (Italy, Spain, Greece...), imprison comrades and intimidate others. What a lot of comrades don't know is the fact that such repression have also been going on in Austria for the last 2 years. Every day people without European Union passports are being expelled, every day left activists and projects get attacked by fascists and every day people get visted by the state police, just because they don't want to shut up and close their eyes to racist politics. In the following article I'll primary focus on the repressions against anarchist groups. We should nevertheless not forget the many arrests during demonstrations or the many interrogations through state authorities.

The recent repressions started in April 1995, just after the two comrades *Gregor Thaler and Peter Koniczek* were found dead under an electric mast. The investigating police proclaim that they tried to fix an explosive charge onto this mast in order to bomb it away. The state uses this act to shine through the Austrian radical left movement, and summons about 200 activists.In the early morning hours of January 23 1996 two private rooms of supposed activists of the anarchist group *Revolutionsbräuhof (RBH)* were searched through, as well the *Anarchistische Buchhandlung* (anarchist bookshop) and an office of a communist group (that was used as post address by the RBH some years ago). The state authorities reproaches the RBH for having published an invitation to violent and criminal acts (§277), degradation of the Austrian Republic and its symbols (§282), the foundation of a criminal organisation (§278, §278a) and finally hostility against the state and its constitution (§246)[i]. Cause are sticky labels that only appeared in one place: the popular bourgeois *Krone Zeitung* (some sort of Austrian version of the Sun) in May 1995. Even though it was very obvious that these stickers are an invention of the Kronen Zeitung, the investigating police didn't interrogate the responsible journalist until January 1996. The author of these stickers *Gerhard Walter* is no unknown person. He has written articles in the journal of the right-wing police union AUF[ii]. Walter never really denied that these stickers were a falsification. Nevertheless these known facts, the judges *Christiane Moser* and *Birgit Kail* signed the raid orders in December 1995, which then took place on January 23 1996.

This was not the end of the repressions against the RBH. On February 23 1996 17 people were invited to interrogations bythe state police. Some days later, on March 17 1996 19 houses/flats were searched through by the state police and a lot of material (computers, discs, books, journals, letters...) were, as on January 23 confiscated (only in June 1996 was most of the confiscated material re-addressed to the owners). The public prosecutor doesn't allow any insight into the documents of the investigation, which normally is a common right you have, when you are being accused of a crime. On March 15 1996 only limited insight is allowed. As the state authorities claim that the investigation are still going in. So the activists of the RBH and all the other accused just don't know why they are being persecuted and what they are accused of. In December 1996 the activists finally got a more than thousand pages thick document about the investigations, which in the end proves nothing new and so the accused activists are as informed as in the beginning. It is meanwhile quite clear, that these whole accusations are just used in order to shine though the anarchist movement, intimidate activists and diminish our solidarity within the movement. It is also clear that these whole investigations are made by some FPÖ-near politicians, judges and police officers. So if one day Haider and his FPÖ would get to the majority of the votes, they

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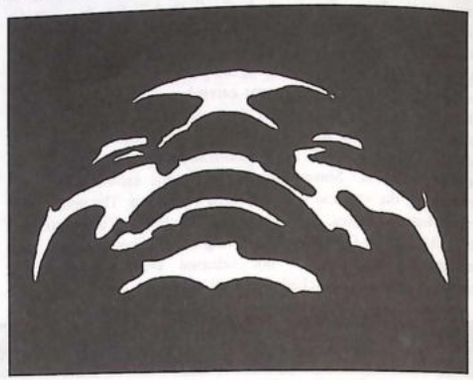
Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin talks to *Organise!* about Black Autonomy

LORENZO KOM'BOA ERVIN was a former Black Panther who fled to Cuba in 1969 after an FBI shoot to kill order was issued on him. Later arrested and imprisoned he was released in 1983 after serving 15 years for hijacking the plane he escaped from the USA in. Whilst inside he continued the struggle, acting as a jailhouse lawyer and prison unionist and developing his political philosophy. Author of *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, Lorenzo spoke to *Organise!* during his speaking tour of Britain in May. For reasons of space, this interview has been edited. A full transcript can be obtained by writing to Newcastle ACF(See inside back page for address).



Organise!: On this tour you have stated that the working class has changed and is changing, and consequently, our approach as revolutionaries must change to take account of this. Can you explain what you mean?

Lorenzo: The working class in the United States, in the United Kingdom and in most parts of the western world, with the influx of other peoples of colour into these countries in considerable numbers, make up considerable minorities and are a considerable part of the labour force. But you can't pretend that this is a period like sixty or seventy years ago with an industrial base and where most of the workers were white, which was true then. Things have changed now over the last twenty or so years, but yet some so-called revolutionary movements persist and keep posturing and saying that the work force is white and that other people should just follow along with their bags in tow behind these white workers, which in fact represents the aristocracy of labour in the sense that they have certainly more resources and certainly a better quality of life than a lot of other labourers of colour have. So from that standpoint, it would be fair to say that the nature of the workforce has changed; there are more women, more Blacks and Asians, in the US and the UK, so we can't keep building movements based on old dead ideology of the white industrial worker and "the worker" as vanguard.

Organise!: So what do you see as the role of the revolutionary movement?

Lorenzo: Well I think the role of the revolutionary movement is still in workplace organising, but I also think, in community organisation. In fact in my mind, the role of community organising is primary, in that the cities, where so many of these workers are concentrated, has become the new battleground in terms of destabilising the government. We don't have massive workplaces anymore, for the most part, which is not to say that they don't exist at all. So what we're talking about is building neighbourhood and community alliances, for instance workers in the community, other people in the community and with peoples of colour, which for me is all important. you have to breakdown racism in the society…racism is not just sentimental, by that I mean it isn't just some idea or deliberate policy. So whatever analysis we make has got to take into account the importance of combatting racism NOT as some kind of thing that we do for altruistic purposes, but because we'll never be able to defeat capitalism in and of itself without dealing with the fact that it uses divisions in the working class.

Organise!: Some revolutionaries would argue that although they base the struggle around the workplace, they also look to organise in the community as well. What would you say to that?

Lorenzo: Well, the syndicalists first of all say that the workplace is the primary place of struggle, and to me they make an out-moded analysis of what even constitutes the working class, in that in their mind there's the idea that somehow the unions are progressive, and what's more the unions are some kind of force that can be revolutionised. Clearly these unions are something that's based IN capitalism. They cannot be a progressive force in the next period. They will have to be destroyed. They are no more than instruments for defensive struggles for workers to get better wages and that sort of thing. They are not in any way, shape or form a revolutionary vehicle themselves, and in this period they don't even constitute anything progressive. They, in fact, are selling workers out routinely and they are not going to be reformed. In my estimation, they're not going to be revolutionised, and in any case they can't be.

Organise!: There's some misunderstanding about why you advocate the formation of autonomous Black community groupings. Can you explain this and how you see these struggles uniting?

Lorenzo: I have been attacked because people think I'm advocating some kind of separatism. Let me just point this out: *Black Autonomy* (the journal which Lorenzo founded ed. note) has no such philosophy of xenophobia. It's not against white people and there is no philosophy about a so-called black state or any other state. It has no conception that there cannot be class unity. In fact we work with a number of white formations of anarchists and so forth. But the reality is, to create class unity, you've got to have a period of time, especially when there's racism there's mistrust which has gone on for years and years. You've got to BUILD this class unity. It's not going to fall out of the sky…you can't make people come together in bogus alliances. There has to be a principled way of doing it and the principled way of doing it is when people struggle around issues of common concern. Now there are issues that affect the Black community which don't affect white workers as a whole, who don't understand them and may even be in opposition to them. We have to create those movements that are autonomous in the communities, whether anti-racist, anti-nazi or whatever it is. In my estimation there is nothing threatening in that at all for white people, I don't understand what that's supposed to be. They've attempted to characterise all Black movements, even anarchist movements as somehow harmful to working class unity. We feel that one of the preconditions for working class unity is that

there be autonomous struggles of historical groups that have been oppressed. There is no doubt in our minds that there are forms of special oppression of groups such as Blacks. Whites are not subjected to this "last hired, first fired" thing and that whole history of racism in the workforce itself. And to pretend that none of this took place, or none of this has any importance in the construction of a revolutionary ideology to me is the worst kind of betrayal and sell out, and it is dogma.

The purpose of coming to the UK was to raise some of these questions with radicals in our scene, and finding new ideas, and finding out who has new ideas and who is non-dogmatic, who is trying to see a way forward. This period has changed and fundamentally altered so many things that we took for granted. It has to force us to reassess what is the working class, what is work, in the face of millions of workers being out of work permanently, in the face of workers being brought here who have no means of employment. There's immigrants and refugees who are being brought here who cannot get a job. What is work to them? How do they feel that they should belong in the British trade unions? There's workers who aren't organised and unions who only care about 'their' privileged workers. How do we deal with that? Do we pretend that these things don't matter?

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THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

"Hey, wow! Trevor's found a way to trainspot on the Internet…"

THE 'INFORMATION REVOLUTION' of computerisation and miniaturisation during the past twenty years has created an 'Information Society'- or so it is said. How real has this 'revolution' been? Has it fundamentally altered relations between the ruling class and the working-class?

The phenomenon can be seen from two main angles. One concerns the technological development of the microchip. The microchip not only offered enough memory and processing power to make the home computer possible, it has come to pervade all kinds of devices like washing machines and cameras. Similarly, it has underpinned a massive and continuing wave of automation in the workplace. Information in this context is the stream of data required by a machine to perform with the minimum of human intervention; the revolution *is* this drive to reduce the human input.

Both in the home and the workplace new technology has been portrayed as labour-saving, freeing a person for more interesting tasks. But whereas companies seek to fill the extra leisure time with increased consumption of CDs, computer games, etc., the labour saved at work is in a economic sense. Through Information Technology (IT), firms can 'downsize' i.e. sack or retire employees and increase profits by extracting the same or more work from fewer staff. The process of creating the information economy, on which the information society rests, has been seen in sectors as diverse as printing, car-manufacturing, where robots are increasingly employed and banking.

The other aspect of the 'revolution' concerns information itself. 'Information' may be seen as facts or knowledge, such as share prices in foreign markets, but it may equally be entertainment. This is because the means are increasingly being found to digitise data, and data can be text, sounds, images or any combination. Here the revolution primarily concerns the means of delivery and access, rather than the content itself, which has often existed in a prior form, thus books preceded CD-ROMs. The difference with these later developments is usually one of flexibility or interactivity given to the user, e.g. being able to search a CD-ROM by any word the user wishes rather than a book's fixed index. In another area, satellite TV, linked with digital techniques, is opening up the prospect in Britain of over two hundred channels.

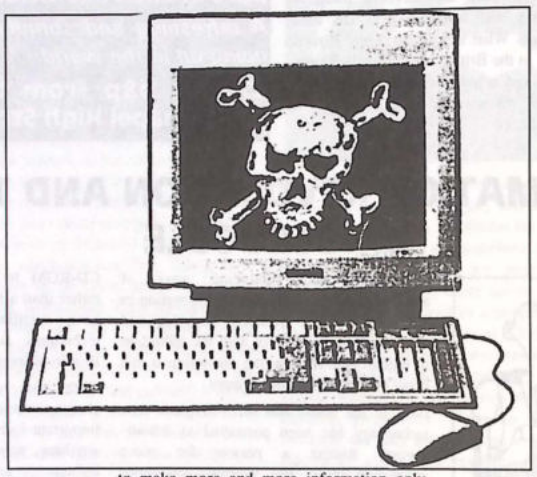
With the resultant smokescreen about choice, interactivity and 'video on demand', important issues are being obscured. Yet, if anything, power, wealth, cultural, political influence, and matters of class, are magnified by the 'Information Revolution'.

Ultimate Agenda

The trail almost invariably leads back to a small clutch of media magnates such as Rupert Murdoch, Silivio Berlusconi, Disney and Time-Warner. These have diversified amongst the fields of publishing, films, radio, TV, CD-ROMs and on-line databases. What their film and TV arms provide is a choice from the least challenging end of the spectrum: action films, light comedies, sport. Where political opinions are expressed, as in their newspapers, these tend to be of the most orthodox pro-capitalist promoting their own ultimate agenda: the increase of profits and market share. Having built up vast markets they thus have maximum influence with the distributors of such products, who are also few in number. The quantity of producers may be vast, but their underlying ideas and values are few. This media environment increasingly saturates the world.

All of this has important psychological consequences for the class struggle, as many people are left unaware of the potential

alternative to 'business as usual'. If radicals' views and actions are ever reported, it will usually be either to demonise or mock. This in itself promotes resignation rather than resistance amongst those who might be feeling their way towards such positions. This is not to say that people do not fight back against their oppression anyway, but it is hardly coincidental that struggles are so often either isolated or channelled into the pathways of union and political party action. The information that would help avoid these traps, based on hard-earned experiences, is not widely and easily available. Establishment views, including what passes for opposition, are. Yet it is greater access to information which is said to be the essence of this revolution. In reality, though there is more information about than ever before, whether business statistics, news, education or entertainment, much of it is more of what we are accustomed to expect in a wider range of media.



The possible exception to this picture is the Internet. The connection effected between thousands of personal and institutional computers has produced something significantly different to the media discussed above, both in terms of the degree of individual involvement and the content of the communications. Many radical and revolutionary publishers and organisations have World Wide Web sites. Particularly in the case of campaigning groups e.g. prisoner support, news can be spread quickly to produce a prompt response.

In addition, much information is intentionally placed on the Internet to be read or downloaded without charge or as shareware. There is an implicit challenge to capitalist notions of exchange and ownership. The fierceness with which the US has pursued the issue of strictly enforced intellectual property rights i.e. copyright and patents, for example in the last GATT negotiations, illustrates the rising profile of this issue and the anxiety felt by the ruling class. Capital is increasingly seen as locked into information-based products. This is not just facts and figures or music but also applies to things like the make-up of genetically-engineered food. For if information such as a patent can simply be copied to a disk in a few minutes, what price ownership of knowledge?

American Views

However, there are problems with the Internet, showing that it is not the totally new community of which some dream. There is the expense of getting, and staying, on-line. Though the costs of the hardware are coming down, most people still do not possess it. This equipment, and the telephone systems supporting it, are even more lacking in poorer parts of the world. Parallel to this is the fact that much material on the Net stems from the West, especially America, and, as business interest grows, it is further skewed towards becoming a marketplace of mainly American views and products. Having begun from a government-funded and academic base, growing commercial involvement threatens to make more and more information only accessible via a 'pay as you go' route. Many theorists now speak of the distinction between the information rich and the information poor. As with the companies advancing into the new media, this reproduces class distinctions that already exist in wealth, education etc.

Governments and police forces have for some time been seeking to monitor the Internet's content and transactions more closely. In America this brought about the 1996 Internet Decency Act and several attempts at the 'Clipper Chip', a 'key' which would give agencies like the FBI access to coded data transmissions. A strange coalition of civil libertarians and businessmen who for very different reasons united on the issue of privacy, has so far scuppered the Clipper. Similarly in Britain, the 1994 Criminal Justice Act defines the transmission of electronic data as publication, making it liable to laws on obscenity and official secrets. There have also been moves to make Internet Service Providers (the firms that connect users) legally responsible for all the material they convey. These measures have produced strong opposition. But the point here is that the authorities are determined to take cyberspace into their jurisdiction.

Finally there is the question of class within the computing world. The previously noted cost of ownership is worsened by the refinements and new programs that are continually being introduced. This reliance on built-in obsolescence is but one example of traditional capitalist thinking: wasteful of resources but it boosts up those profits. Bill Gates, founder of the software company Microsoft, has, in twenty years, become one of the richest people on the planet. In January 1997 he owned 141 million shares valued at $83.37 each, from which in 1996 he was thus 'earning' $30 million daily. For all the rhetorical praise of free competition that the computer industry shares with the rest of capitalism, Gates' fortune flows from Microsoft having engineered deals so as to make its software the standard for the world's personal computers: in other words, through a quest for monopoly.

'Revolution'

Companies like Microsoft and Apple make much of their relaxed working approach, in contrast to the straight-laced corporate men of IBM before them. However, hierarchy still persists, from the entrepreneurial founders, through the programmers and engineers and down to the assemblers of silicon chips. California's Silicon Valley workers suffer more occupational illness than in general manufacturing. And clearly, Bill Gate's, salary and those of his peers is vastly more than that of the workers upon whom their fortunes are built. But though issues from which struggles might come are present, workers in the computer industry, and indeed all jobs that involve IT, are perhaps extra vulnerable to management's demands. This is because of the ease with which their work can be monitored e.g. number of key-strokes per hour, and switched to another part of the country or the world where lower wages are paid to equally skilled workers.

It would be ridiculous to claim that there have not been many changes in the past twenty years in the ways in which we perceive and receive information. It comes more quickly, in more forms, to more people than ever before. But its' production, distribution and consumption have been based on already existing hierarchies. It is a 'revolution' only in a loose capitalist sense.

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CRIMINALISATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

ARE WE CRIMINALS ? Are you ? The rhetoric of the ruling class, their servants and apologists certainly suggests we *are* criminals and that we are to blame for everything wrong in the world. This is a song the capitalists never get tired of singing: there's something wrong with the working class !

Criminalisation of the working class is a set of policies applied more or less severely depending on the rough balance of power between the twin poles of bourgeois democracy: conservative, reactionary, statist on the one-hand, do-gooding, moralising, populist on the other. It is something that is always with us. It is also a future history becoming all too horribly real - *why ?* ' Law and Order' usually plays a big part in elections but didn't in May - *why not ?* The reason is that Labour and the Tories agree on both the causes of criminality and its 'cure' - the inadequacy of the working class as parents and draconian assaults on individual 'criminals' publicly celebrated as a means to cow and intimidate the rest of the sheep. Criminality is seen as a working class disease. Its cause, basically poor and uneducated people, must be caught and shot with the 'magic bullet' of prison and punitive sentencing or isolated by public humiliation, electronic tagging, injunctions and permanent branding, for instance through publicly-available registers of sex-offenders which invite vigilantism and mob justice.

Campaign

The process of criminalisation is not new. When we read about the 'sturdy beggars' of Elizabethan times, debtors prisons or the pariah status of the 'undeserving poor' we hear echoes of a long campaign to maximise the power of the ruling class by dividing and stigmatising those who are ruled.

We are criminalised in three main ways. Firstly, the state invents a vast range of offences, usually based on the desire to protect property and control working class collective action and violence. It defines these as 'criminal', unacceptable in a 'civilised' society. In contrast, upper class offences like fraud, tax evasion or corruption are treated as individual falls from grace, exceptions to the rule deserving lenient treatment and sympathy. Working class 'crime' such as shoplifting or benefit fraud was seen this way in the 60s and 70s but the right-wing dominance of politics has swept belief in the idea of the working class as victims of an unequal society away; crime has become simply a symptom of wholesale working class degeneracy. Sections of the populace who have never committed a crime can now be treated as if they had. One of the sickest outcomes of such beliefs was the forced sterilisation and incarceration of 3000 children accused of being 'mentally defective', 'sexually immoral' or 'incapable of intelligent parenthood' (does this ring any bells ?) in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s. Tory politicians are proposing that children be tried in adult courts. Michael Howard proposed that the parents of children who have not committed crimes but were merely *in danger* of committing crimes should be fined or suffer curfews enforced by electronic tagging if they fail or are unable to obey 'parental control orders'.

Stigmatised

Secondly, the working class is stigmatised as criminal or potentially criminal on the basis of a few sensationalised cases. This allows the State to concoct laws which bear down most on the working class and to justify a presumption of guilt by police and courts which is parroted by the media and picked up by reactionary groups who then threaten violence, demand the 'criminal' be evicted from their homes or hurl abuse and worse. This treatment is not now reserved for the 'worst' criminals (like sex offenders) but increasingly directed at anyone who fails to adhere to the new right-wing code of conduct (for instance parents who cannot 'control' their children in East Sussex or on the Meadowell Estate). Being black, a lone parent, living on a ghetto estate, being young or unemployed, all are being portrayed as criminals who haven't been caught or parents of a new generation of the lawless. Actions and conditions previously seen as social problems are being criminalised. Benefit fraud and immigration officials are joining police stop-checks ostensibly to catch rogue lorry drivers or unsafe vehicles. They treat everyone like criminals and actively gather information on other people whose names are then run through computers. One-third of Britain receives some form of means-tested benefit and all are potential criminals in the eyes of the State. If you are treated like a criminal it is because the State thinks you are a criminal. This allows people who have committed no crime to be penned up in detention centres or manacled while on remand, even if they are dying, as happened in one recent case. These are merely the worst aspects of the drive to socially control behaviour and criminalise those who resist - parent-school contracts, compulsory

parenting classes for dysfunctional families, probationary tenancies in council housing, curfews to keep young people indoors. In America law enforcement is increasingly resorting to 'shaming sentences' where the guilty must take out newspaper ads or erect signs outside their houses publicly proclaiming their crime.

Reactionary

Thirdly, any demand for change or resistance to this political program is itself criminalised through reactionary laws. As the area of freedom gets smaller we are increasingly criminalised. 18th Century rationalists campaigned for a universal code of justice which abstractly judged all actions. What they failed to realise was that the State will always develop codes of justice that serve *its* interests and that in a parliamentary dictatorship like Britain all actions will be legalised or criminalised at the whim of the ruling class. Things like the Criminal Justice Act and the massive expansion of the 'Surveillance Society' threaten to make guilt by accusation and association the norm. Demonstrations are photographed, city centres filmed, unmarked police vans with infra-red cameras prowl night-time streets, benefit hotlines receive thousands of malicious, unsubstantiated accusations every day. We are increasingly patrolled and controlled, seen as dangerous or potential criminals. Against this threat (a threat wholly concocted by the ruling class to justify a police state), any repressive measure is justified.

The election of a Labour Government is unlikely to slow this process and may even accelerate it. The massive majority was won by votes from Middle England, people who are basically conservative, well-off, in secure jobs who simply got tired of the Tories and voted instead for a different 'Tory' party - Labour. MPs representing the clean streets and shopping centres of the south are likely to parrot the prejudices of their constituents, not fight for social justice.

Tide

In such a situation, with a right-wing political tide running so strongly, it is difficult to see what can be done. Around the world, though, there are examples of people successfully challenging injustice. The landless peasants of the Sem Terra movement in Brazil are occupying unused land and forcing the Government to award it to them. French workers have forced the government to retreat on Thatcherite austerity policies. South Korean workers paralysed the country protesting against attacks on labour rights.

Cultural of resistance

All these campaigns have a number of things in common. Firstly, they successfully universalise their action so that all sections of the working class can understand and agree with what they are fighting for. Secondly, they all involve determined mass action which ignores rules and laws designed to curb protest. Thirdly there are very high levels of solidarity inside the campaigns and a willingness to accept the support of and draw into the struggle other groups - this only comes about by extensive political education, grass-roots control and consensus not command politics. If we are to successfully challenge the process of criminalisation, we must do the same. We must develop a culture of resistance which understands that the State's attacks may appear to be aimed at particular groups but are in fact part of a broader process of wholesale criminalisation, isolation and control. Work on estates, determined campaigns against attacks on the working class, taking our ideas into new arenas, strengthening and renewing the belief in mass action - these are our urgent tasks.

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The Union Makes Us Strong?

SYNDICALISM: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

THE ACF HAS never, despite what some of our critics may have suggested, made our criticisms of syndicalism, including its anarcho variety, a "distinguishing characteristic" (see Black Flag Issue 211) of our politics. In a world-wide 'labour movement' dominated by social democratic ideas and practice and thoroughly integrated into capitalism, our focus of attack has not been on the relatively tiny syndicalist and 'alternative' union structures which exist. Rather, our arguments have been against trade unionism and *for* working class self-organised struggle.

However, anarcho-syndicalism remains the majority current within class struggle anarchism and is, despite various splits and feuds within its international organisations, in a state of resurgence. Now, therefore, is a good time to present a critical analysis of the theory and practice of syndicalism.

Theory and practice

Rather than separate theory and practice we will attempt to show how the behaviour of various syndicalist movements has been informed by its theoretical foundations and the political influences acting upon it. Syndicalism has been accused of 'apoliticism' and, indeed, a certain *anti*-politicicism has been a central feature of many syndicalist organisations. This is only half the story, however, and fails to take into consideration the fact that syndicalism has come under the influence of many political currents, not least anarchism, and that it should not be forgotten that these have included reformist socialism (particularly the French CGT), nationalism (notably the Italian UIL) and even monarchism (monarcho-syndicalism in turn of the century France)!

Origins

First we must look at the origins of syndicalism. "Syndicalism" is simply the French word for "unionism". It was the mass syndicat (or union) in France, the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT), founded in 1895, which gave "syndicalism" the meaning it has today. The CGT was militant, de-centralised, initially sceptical of parliamentary participation and considered the workplace as the front-line of the class war. When such tactics developed in other countries, militants consciously used the term syndicalism to differentiate themselves from the openly reformist, social democratic Trade Unions. Syndicalist unions began to become a significant factor in the decade before the First World War, as both a reflection of the ongoing class struggle and as the result of the efforts of consciously 'political' minorities critical of 'socialist' parliamentarism. The early syndicalist movement was far from homogenous, politically or organisationally. In many countries the syndicalist movement developed through deliberate attempts to organise those workers who had been ignored by the established social democratic unions, particularly the unskilled and immigrant workforces (the experience of the Industrial Workers of the World is a good example of this), whilst in other countries, syndicalist unions were craft or trade based and organised highly skilled artisans (e.g. the CGT in France).

Political minorities

Amongst the political minorities attracted to the syndicalist method were the anarchists. Indeed, anarchists were amongst the earliest syndicalist organisers in many countries, notably in France, Spain and Argentina. The syndicalist movement was certainly attractive to many anarchists who, having seen their influence wane following the period of "propaganda by the deed" (the 1890s), saw in syndicalism's combativity and distrust of parliamentary methods a

'natural' home for their politics. In some countries syndicalist unions were led by ideological anarchists and everywhere anarchist militants joined syndicalist organisations. Some anarchists, however, were uneasy about the *identification* of anarchism with unionism. Others questioned the syndicalist method itself. In Spain, where anarchism was to become closely identified with the syndicalist Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT), often furious polemics ensued throughout the 1890s and 1910s between those anarchists, such as the anarchist communists grouped around the *Tierra y Libertad* journal, who felt the syndicalist methods were inherently reformist and a step backwards and those who believed that syndicalism offered anarchism a vehicle for reaching the masses.

Degeneration

Amongst the clearest critics of the identification of anarchism with syndicalism was the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. In 1907, when syndicalism was drawing ever larger numbers of workers, including anarchist workers, to its ranks, Malatesta argued that, "Syndicalism, in spite of the declarations of its most ardent partisans, contains, by the very nature of its constitution, all the elements of degeneration which have corrupted the workers' movement in the past. In fact, being a movement which proposes to defend the present interests of the workers, it must necessarily adapt itself to the living conditions of the present" (Les Temps Nouveaux, 1907). Other anarchist militants held strong reservations about the syndicalist method.

The French anarchist metalworker Benoit Liothier expressed the fear, held by many, that syndicalism would tend to economism and therefore to reformism. "Syndicalism cannot be revolutionary if it cannot be political...whether we like it or not the economic struggle is tied to the political struggle." (Archives Departmentales de la Loire, 1914). Like many anarchists of his generation, however, Liothier eventually became a militant of the CGT.

That anarchists identified with syndicalism and were often at the forefront of syndicalist organisation is of little surprise. Emergent syndicalism appeared to offer tactics which related libertarian, direct-action orientated ideas to the every day struggle of the workers. Anarchist workers wanted to be where the conflict with the bosses (and, therefore, the state) was at its most acute and for anarchists to have dismissed syndicalism at this historical point would undoubtedly have marginalised them further. For many anarchists the solution to any perceived problems within syndicalism could be solved by encouraging its tendency towards anti-politicism and its combative spirit. This meant a total engagement with syndicalist unionism and the birth of *anarcho*-syndicalism. Many of these people were dismissive of the idea of creating separate anarchist organisations and saw in the union the means and the end of the anarchist revolution.

Against this 'fusion' some anarchists argued for the maintenance of separate anarchist organisations which would be active both inside and outside the unions. Malatesta, amongst others, advocated such a tactic, as did the anarchists who became known as "Platformists" during the 1920s. A fear, which was well founded, was that anarcho-syndicalism would become dominated by the syndicalist part of the equation to the detriment of a clear revolutionary perspective which related to all aspects of working class life, not just the factory or workshop.

Anarcho- and revolutionary syndicalism

The relationship between the anarcho-syndicalists and the 'revolutionary' syndicalists varied from country to country. Many 'revolutionary' syndicalists rejected even the 'anti-political' politics of the anarchists and saw in syndicalism the form and the *content* of revolution. They created a syndicalist *ideology*, at the pinnacle of which was the union organised General Strike which would usher in the new society. For some syndicalists the General Strike assumed an almost mythical significance and replaced the idea of violent revolution, which was considered unrealistic. For 'revolutionary' syndicalist ideologues the union replaced the party and was identified with the class as a whole. A desire to organise *all* workers, regardless of political or religious belief, led to 'revolutionary' syndicalists attempting to marginalise anarcho-syndicalists in order to appeal to workers who actually remained tied to social democracy.

Whilst this anti-politicism led many of the 'revolutionary' syndicalists to a pronounced anti-statism, it did not stop others from entering into alliances with 'revolutionary' parties and politicians. Although politics were unwelcome *in* the syndical organisation itself this did not mean that 'revolutionary' syndicalism was not involved in politics.

Whilst the Italian 'revolutionary' syndicalists flirting with extreme nationalism from 1914 onwards, demanding that Italy join the imperialist bloodbath (a demand totally opposed, to their great credit, by the anarcho-syndicalists of the Union Sindicale Italiana) is probably the most graphic example of syndicalist political alliances, many others existed.

In Norway the pre-war 'revolutionary' syndicalist "fagopposition" (union opposition), for example, was closely identified with the left wing of social democracy whilst in the United States the industrial unionist (the North American equivalent of syndicalist) Industrial Workers of the World were for the first three years of their existence (1905-1908) riven with open political rivalry between the Socialist Party of America and the Socialist Labour Party. In Ireland the syndicalistic Irish Transport and General Workers Union was led by people who had been or still were active members of socialist parties and Irish syndicalism, despite its militancy, rarely exhibited the anti-statism and anti-party sentiment of other syndicalist movements.

Often 'revolutionary' syndicalists appeared to be simply impatient with the stodgy Second International version of socialism that dominated the Left and were not against 'revolutionary parties' per se. The mass defection of 'revolutionary' syndicalists to Bolshevism in the period immediately following the Russian Revolution bears witness to this. Collaboration with the bourgeoisie was not confined to the nominally apolitical 'revolutionary' wing of syndicalism, however. An interesting example of anarcho-syndicalism being found on the wrong side of the class barricade, twenty years before the infamous CNT involvement in the Spanish government, is the experience of Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution - the Casa del Obrero Mundial

During the first twenty years of the 20th century Mexico was engulfed in revolutionary turmoil. Various 'constitutionalist' (i.e. democratic) capitalist factions vied for power whilst attempting to overthrow the dictatorship of General Porfirio Diaz . Meanwhile the Agrarian (landless peasant) movement of Emiliano Zapata and the emerging urban working class attempted to defend their own interests amidst the chaos. The Agrarians engaged in guerrilla activity against the various 'revolutionary' governments with the aim of reclaiming and defending the land of the indigenous population from the landowners. During the years 1906 to 1915 the Partido Liberal Mexicano (P.L.M.) played a leading in role in attempting to bring together Agrarian and proletarian revolt. Beginning from an advanced left liberal-democratic position the P.L.M., under the influence of the Magon brothers, developed into an anarchist communist organisation with its own guerrilla units involved in the expropriation

of land in the Baja California region and leading strikes in Veracruz, amongst other areas. The P.L.M. called for "Tierra y Libertad" (Land and Freedom), the immediate expropriation of the landlords and bosses and the abolition of the state.

Red Battalions

In 1912 the anarcho-syndicalist Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World Worker) was formed and rapidly attracted the urban workers of Mexico City to its ranks. Yet, within three years the anarcho-syndicalists were organising Red Battalions to fight in defence of the Mexican state! Although the *Casa* emerged with a typical anti-politicism and a desire to concentrate on economic struggle several factors led it to give support to one bourgeois faction, the Constitutionalist forces of Venustiano Carranza, against the Agrarians and their P.L.M. allies. Firstly, the anarcho-syndicalists viewed the *industrial* proletariat as the organised vanguard of the social revolution, in spite of the fact that they constituted a tiny minority of the Mexican working population. This vanguard, they argued, had to be developed and expanded as rapidly as possible and the anarcho-syndicalists sought what they hoped would be the best conditions for this. Secondly, the anarcho-syndicalists considered the Agrarian movement as an essentially reactionary one, committed to turning back the clock, and rejecting the 'advances' in technology and understanding that capitalism had brought. They pointed to the Zapatista's "religiosity" and general 'backwardness' as proof of their danger to the 'advanced' sections of the working class. Finally, and most importantly, the anarcho-syndicalists believed that the progressive, democratic bourgeois state which was offering the *Casa* freedom to organise (and in fact was actually encouraging the *Casa* to organise!) should be defended against 'reaction', Agrarianist or anti-constitutionalist.

After the anarcho-syndicalist Red Battalions had played their part in 'saving' the Mexican state, the inevitable happened. In the spring of 1916 the Constitutionalist government turned on the *Casa*, disbanded the Red Battallions and forcibly closed down the syndicates following the second of two General Strikes that year. The failure of the anarcho-syndicalists to recognise the class nature of the state, despite all their verbal anti-statism, had led them to take sides against genuinely revolutionary movements.

Bolshevisation and "the end of the mass syndicalism"

Without doubt the high-point of syndicalism was the period between (roughly) 1895 and 1914. In this period the only current, in the workers movement on an international level, to offer an alternative to mainstream social democracy was syndicalism It is of course possible to argue that much of syndicalism was in fact social democratic in content if not in form.

However, despite Leninist claims to the contrary, this was far from the end of the story and the revolutionary wave which engulfed the world following the 1917 Russian Revolution also saw a 'revival' of syndicalism following the four years of world war. Syndicalism now, however, had two new rivals, Bolshevism and council or left communism.

Bolshevism's triumph in Russia sent shock waves throughout the workers movement. Social Democratic parties everywhere developed would-be Bolshevik factions. These factions sooner or later split from the old parties and formed Communist Parties modelled on the Russian example. Many of the very earliest Communist Parties, however, emerged from the syndicalist, anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movements. The CGT in France developed a powerful communist-syndicalist faction; the IWW in the United States was wracked by in-fighting between dyed-in-the-wool industrial unionists and budding Bolsheviks; many of Britain's foremost pre-war syndicalists such as Tom Mann quickly gravitated towards the embryonic Communist Party. Impressed by the dynamism of Bolshevism and its ostensible break with social democracy, former syndicalists constituted the early rank and file of such parties everywhere. Amongst anarchists also, Bolshevism possessed a magnet-like quality, not least because it was associated with the Soviets, the council organisations which seemed to offer an alternative to state organisation.

The Workers Councils

When news came through that everything in the Socialist Fatherland was not rosy and as Bolshevism attempted to create both a Third International of political parties and a Red Trade Union International under their strict control, dissension began to emerge. Many of the earliest critics of Moscow were not syndicalists however but Marxists previously involved with socialist political parties. These militants began to question the Trade Union and Parliamentary policy of the Bolsheviks and their closest impersonators. Groups such as the Workers Socialist Federation in Britain, the Communist Workers Party of Germany and similar 'left' communists (meaning 'left' of the Third International) saw in the experience of the revolutionary workers councils (or Soviets) in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1919 the form, as they saw it, that the new struggles would take. After coming out against the Bolsheviks and attempting to create their own International in 1921 (the original 4th International!) this political current became known as council communism. Council communist organisations only took anything approaching mass form in Germany although they also existed in countries such as Holland, France, Belgium and Britain.

At the same time the international syndicalist movement began to re-organise itself through the creation of the I.W.A.(International Working Mens' Association). In 1922 the syndicalist movement could still claim large unions such as the Unione Sindicale Italiana (500,000 members), the Confederacao Geral do Trabalho in Portugal (150,000) and the Freie Arbeiter Union in Germany (120,000). They were joined by the Spanish Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) in 1923. By 1923, however, the Leninist/Stalinist ice-age was beginning and between that and the emergence of fascism, syndicalism was facing a difficult period, to say the least. Within 10 years the only mass syndicalist union left was the CNT. The others were now reduced to groups of militants scattered in exile or living in a semi-underground condition. By 1936 all that was left were small propaganda groups in various countries, a few minority unions and the 2 million strong CNT about to play a historic role in the Spanish Civil War and Revolution.

Pierre Monatte:

leading anarchist supporter of syndicalism

The Spanish Revolution - The End of Anarchism? ***(to be continued in the next issue)***

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS ABC

Abolish crime. Abolish prison.

Polish Anti-Fascists

THE TRIAL OF 13 people in Poland for the killing of a fascist in self-defence (as reported in *Organise*! 45) has taken place. The result was that 8 were freed, and 5 were convicted. They are planning to appeal against their sentences, and are therefore requesting financial support to help pay for this. They also need money as they all have large fines to pay.

Send messages of support to the 5:

Tomasz Wilkoszewski (15 years for murder); Gregorz Pasak (3 years 6 months); Rafat Socha (3 years 6 months); Andrezej Szczesniewski (3 years).

All at Areszt Sledczy, UL. W.P. 24, 97-300 Piotrkow Trybualski, Poland.

Mariusz Zych (3 years). He is at Zaktad Karny, Mecka Wola, Poland.

Send donations to ABC-Warszawa PO-Box 71, 01-125 Warszawa, Poland

Ben Alterman

Following his 34 day hunger strike last year (see *Organise*! 44) which resulted in the Office of Corrections admitting that they were wrong to withhold his mail and that it wouldn't happen again, Ben was surprised to find himself being granted parole on February 18th this year by the Victoria Adult Parole Board in Australia. He sees this as a vindication of the value of prisoner support and extends his thanks to all the people who supported him. We wish him well!

The Toxteth Two

Ray Gilbert and John Kamara were convicted in December 1981 of killing John Suffield, a betting shop manager in Toxteth, Liverpool, on 13th March 1981. They were sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and 6 years for robbery to run concurrently. There are, however, serious doubts as to their convictions and evidence exists which proves their innocence. A number of things casts doubts on their convictions; none of the eye witnesses picked them out during identity parades; no forensic evidence was provided linking them to the crime; evidence was fabricated by police and other inmates; the prosecution used uncorroborated statement evidence; their alibis were not properly investigated by the police; there was interference of defence witnesses; custody records were destroyed; deals were made between police and remand prisoners for shorter sentences to testify against the two accused, with interviews and statements not being released; and two juries were dismissed, one on a point of law, and the other for reasons not disclosed.

Informants

In 1981, prosecution witness Thomas Pickett admitted to other inmates at HMP Risley that his statement was fabricated. The Home Office took 7 years to look into this. In 1992, all remand prosecution witnesses were requestioned due to serious concerns about their statements against the two men. Liverpool police refuse to release the original inquiry document in order to protect their informants. There are believed to be other statements made by remand prisoners interviewed at the time; there is also documentation from subsequent inquiries into the conviction.

In 1993 C3 department of the Home Office asked police to look into points raised in letters to MPs. They concluded the convictions were 'safe'. In the same year the Rough Justice team lost all of Ray's legal documentation which has caused him severe problems in obtaining correct paperwork.

Both men consistently protest their innocence and resist their maltreatment whenever possible. Because of this they are often singled out for special attention. Ray is currently in the Segregation Unit. Their case has recently been forwarded to the newly appointed Criminal Case Review Board which is supposed to investigate miscarriages of justice. There are already serious concerns about the effectiveness of this body, despite the fact that it has yet to do anything of note.

This case is yet another serious frame-up in Britain. Both men are continuing their struggle for justice, and we urge you to support them however you can.

Send letters of support to:- Ray Gilbert, H10111, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 5TZ.

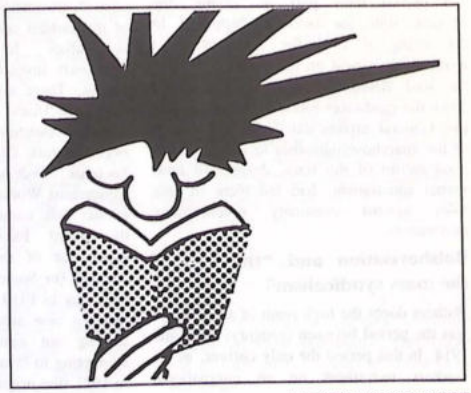
John Kamara, H10109, HMP Swaleside, Brabazon Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4DZ.

For more information contact:- Newcastle ABC, c/o PO Box 1TA, Newcastle, NE99 1TA.

DOLE BONDAGE - UP YOURS!

Dole Bondage - Up Yours! is a pamphlet in the form of an open letter of resignation by Stuart Bracewell as secretary of Wales Against the Job Seekers Allowance (WAJSA). It recounts the development of the group until late 1996. By then, as happens in many single issue campaigns, leftist domination of a broad front of activists first rendered the group irrelevant to those it had been formed to empower, in this case the unemployed. Then it sapped the group of the creative energy needed to publicise and fight the issue, by calling another boring demo with limited potential. Finally it destroyed the group as it stood by inactivity, by not building for or turning up for the march they had called, leaving unemployed activists demoralised and disillusioned. As an angry founder member of WAJSA, Stuart Bracewell exposes the cynical and redundant organisations such as the CPSA, Socialist Party (then Militant) etc. whom he rightly blames for the stagnation of the group. This is a lesson to us all.

WAJSA was, with hindsight, doomed from the first, containing an alliance of anarchists and Earth-Firsters and members of Militant,



Socialist Labour Party, Cymru Goch, Alliance for Workers Liberty and later, the CPSA. As is often the case when such groups come together "sectarian differences....seemed to have been put aside". Sectarian differences are a red herring when it comes to working with the left. What is really at issue is our entirely different agendas. What proves to be a problem, as it did in WAJSA, is that the Left's first tactic is to make sure that their agenda becomes that of the group. In response, libertarians frequently put our agenda on the back-burner, or express it only apologetically, for the sake of unity. In this case, the libertarian agenda was the empowerment of the unemployed. The Leftist agenda was the empowerment of CPSA members working in Benefit Agency/Employment Service, which was eventually exposed by their own tactics and refusal to engage in any action opposed by CPSA representatives. These agendas were not only different but, as time has told, mutually exclusive.

"Ultra-Left nonsense"

The CPSA are the union whose members' job it has been to implement the welfare state and to protect its resources from 'fraud' by claimants. Since the introduction of the JSA in particular, this role has been extended to the active persecution of the unemployed. In WAJSA, the inevitable conflict of interests came to a head when CPSA reps turned up to accuse libertarians of planning assaults on their members. This was part of the hysterical response of much of the Left to the Three Strikes policy; a policy which does not involve recommending physical assaults on employment staff, has not actually been implemented anywhere except in Edinburgh where it originated and has not even been mentioned, let alone debated, in WAJSA until this point. Suggestions that the CPSA members obstruct the legislation were labelled "ultra-left nonsense" by a CPSA steward, and to occupy offices of managers in a show of "mutual solidarity" between the CPSA workers and claimants was called "Mickey Mouse terrorism" by a Socialist Party member. As *Dole Bondage* points out itself, "abstract calls for *unity* and *solidarity* are futile unless there is something concrete to base that unity on, and mutual acts of solidarity".

Dole Bondage raised particular interest in Nottingham Campaign Against the JSA (NCAJSA), not least because it reached that group exactly at the same time as the Left disassociated themselves from NCAJSA. NCAJSA was lucky, having potentially fallen prey to Leftist inertia, and worse, itself. Fortunately, the Left are so weak these days that they tend to drift off if they can't dominate a group by numbers or by large amounts of ill-directioned activism (letter writing, press work etc.). The 'spontaneously libertarian' nature of NCJSA (most of its long-standing members had never met before the group was started) frightened the Left as soon as they appeared, because of the high level of political awareness and consequent debate in the group. This process of discussing politics in meetings is very frustrating to trade unionists in particular, who claim to know only that the workers are right and potentially have power, and that claimants are victims of capital and have no power. Well, where does this leave the unemployed when they perceive themselves to be in conflict with workers? Simply raising this question meant that NCAJSA was "ideologically confused". Things came to a head when a leading Militant member initiated an anti-Project Work demo at the offices of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, in the middle of nowhere, volunteering his cadre in support and also to do the press work and arrange an 'appointment' with the manager to make sure he would be present. Scarily like the WAJSA experience, none of these promises materialised and the demo was an embarrassing flop. The office wasn't even staffed at the time of the demo! Soon the group heard through minutes of a Trades Council meeting sent to the unemployed workers delegate! that the group was "anti-worker" and had been dropped.

If the Left had been a large or very active proportion of NCAJSA membership, this would have been as destructive to the group as the presence of the Left was to WAJSA. Happily, NCAJSA is now free to criticise those who need criticising; those who need to wake up and realise that we no longer live in a clear-cut world of worker vs. boss (if we ever did). Politics and daily life is far more complex. For example, as *Dole Bondage* points out, it is the same leftists who oppose and attack scabs for undermining the power of workers as are now attempting to undermine the power of the unemployed to survive the attacks of the state. They do this by supporting the workers who uncritically implement state legislation, uncritically except to demand screens to protect themselves from the evil and violent unemployed. They fail to see that cutting off someone's benefit, or even threatening to, goes beyond 'doing their jobs'. It is threatening violence -starvation- against claimants. We have to ask, would the reaction be as indifferent to racist or sexist legislation. Of course not, and rightly. It would seem that, as long as a worker is a 'legitimate' worker i.e. not a scab that the unemployed can be sacrificed so that that worker can build his or her career. As a CPSA member of WAJSA put it, when it was suggested that industrial action should be taken, "(it was better that) union members implement the JSA than scabs".

Groundswell

It has to be said that the non-Labourite Groundswell network has provided a national framework for debate and activism essential for groups such as the one in Nottingham to survive. If WAJSA had been less Left dominated and more involved in Groundswell (which *Dole Bondage* admits it was not) then the libertarian-minded might have found the support necessary to establish their own agenda from the start. For clarification, the ACF is involved in local groups and consequently in Groundswell. Whilst much valuable debate about the JSA takes place in the ACF we do not seek to set up JSA groups or to co-ordinate them like the Left do their 'front organisations', nor to take them over! We seek to participate in what we call the 'culture of resistance' as it emerges, and to both support it practically and influence it with our ideas on an open and non-cynical basis.

Things are somewhat 'up in the air' for the anti-JSA movement nationally, as it waits to see what form of forced labour New Labour is offering the unemployed and plans its response. But a combination of a Labour government and the leftist abandonment of the interests of the unemployed makes it easier for claimants to identify the real enemy. Capitalism, of whatever variety, needs the unemployed to stay unemployed to keep its workers working. It should be no surprise then that the left-wing of capitalism wants to stifle political debate amongst the unemployed.

The Pamphlet is available from *Infantile Disorder*. PO Box 10 (no other mention), Pontypool NP4 8YH Wales. Cost £1.

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these publications:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole C1, c/o 11 Forth St, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of group of same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Activist and Thinker

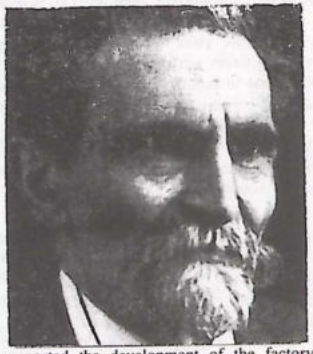
The Anarchist Revolution. Polemical Articles 1924-1931. Errico Malatesta. 124 pages. Freedom Press. £3.50

THIS BOOK, EDITED and introduced by Vernon Richards, gathers together articles translated in full for the first time and intended to supplement *Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* also published by Freedom Press. Malatesta was an Italian anarchist agitator active for more than 60 years. These writings are important because they cover the period of fascist reaction in Italy for much of which Malatesta was under house arrest. The "preventive counter-revolution" as another outstanding anarchist communist, Luigi Fabbri, a close associate of Malatesta, called the rise of Mussolini and Fascism, was to lay waste to the effervescent optimism of the Italian anarchists.

Malatesta remained an anarchist communist through his long life as a revolutionary. He took an active part as a militant devoted to organisation in the Unione Anarchica Italiana (UAI) which was founded in 1920. The founding of this organisation did not mean the uniting of all anarchists in one body. A good part of the movement, including the anti-organisational current among the anarchist communists, with Luigi Galleani as their leading light, as well as the anarchist Individualists, took a critical attitude to the UAI, judging it as too 'centralising'. In the face of these divisions, very characteristic of the Italian movement, with harsh arguments and fierce polemics, there were periodic efforts to at least find unity in action in the light of the setback of the revolution and the common foe of reaction and fascism.

Practical

This explains Malatesta's articles in this collection on individualism where he attempts to persuade adherents of this current of the eminent logic of communism, at the same time underlining the possible bureaucratic and centralising dangers that could arise. Malatesta never gave in to the vaunting optimism that afflicted Kropotkin. He was not afraid to realise that problems are bound to arise. Only at one time, in the light of the Bolshevik seizure of power in the name of 'communism' did he consider the label 'associationist' rather than 'communist'. These doubts soon pass and he re-affirms his devotion to the concept of anarchist communism throughout the other essays that follow. Similarly he addresses himself to the problem of the unions. Always critical of syndicalism, whether anarcho- or revolutionary, he says: " So what should the anarchists do when the workers' organisation, faced with the inflow of a majority driven to it by their economic needs alone, ceases to be a revolutionary force and becomes involved in a balancing act between capital and labour and possibly even a factor in preserving the status quo". However he fails to carry through these criticisms to their logical conclusions, and opts for "anarchists to remain in these organisations, as they are, to work within them and seek to push them forward to the best of their ability, ready to avail themselves, in critical moments of history, of the influence they may have gained, and to transform them swiftly from modest weapons of defence to powerful tools of attack". This begs the question, whether the unions, syndicalist or otherwise, can be so used, and whether new forms of organisation, for example workers councils, would not arise in revolutionary times. It is easy being wise with hindsight, but we must remember that Malatesta was already armed with a critique of syndicalism and had



supported the development of the factory councils.

He came to the conclusion that the establishment of a libertarian society would be the result of a series of successive breaks and periods of gradual progress. This progress meant an adoption of a "practical programme that can be adapted to the various circumstances that may arise as society develops prior to, during and after the revolution" (*On 'Anarchist Revisionism'*). Whilst not in the least abandoning the need for a revolutionary break with the old society, he saw that there would be periods of preparation, when anarchists would have to do their utmost to prepare the masses of the population through propaganda and education.

All of this raises a number of questions. Will this be the scenario for the establishment of an anarchist society, via a series of revolutionary changes? Will there be periods in between of relative stability? Or will the transition to anarchist communism involve one cataclysmic break? Malatesta was influenced by the thought that somehow Fascism would collapse, due to antagonisms between the different currents within it, or antagonism from sections of the ruling class that were supporting it for the time being, or as a result of a mass uprising or as combination of these factors. He must have envisaged the establishment of some 'left social' republic as a first stage after the fall of fascism. However he failed to envisage the World War, and then the establishment of the "Historic Compromise" in Italy, a direct consequence of the Cold War.

Platform

Finally, the book contains a polemic between Malatesta and Nestor Makhno about the *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. Makhno wrote this with other Russian and Ukrainian anarchists, advancing the need for a General Union of Anarchists and for collective responsibility and tactical and theoretical unity. Malatesta quite correctly points out that a General Union was impossible, as opposing tendencies within anarchism could not long last within the same organisation, quoting the Platform itself on this question. Having got down to the fact that the Platformists meant a specific anarchist communist organisation, which they themselves should have made clear, Malatesta then delivers a number of criticisms about collective responsibility, majority decisions, and the Executive Committees as proposed by the Platform. In some ways this exchange appears to be a dialogue of people not really understanding what each other means. Malatesta criticises the concept of collective responsibility and then elaborates something that seems to be exactly what the Platform means by collective responsibility. Now, I have always taken the expression Executive Committee as proposed by the platform to mean a co-ordinating body controlled by the membership, perfectly compatible with anarchist and revolutionary principles. However, the term is ambiguous and is inadequately explained. Should not have Malatesta got to the substance of what the Platform meant, rather than react in a knee-jerk way to the use of the term? Makhno's clarity on the need to solve the problems of disorganisation are not adequately answered by Malatesta. Indeed, the general repression throughout Europe meant that the whole problem of organisation was not to be seriously debated again until the fifties.

AUSTRIAN STATE ATTACKS ANARCHISTS *continued from page 5*

could easily use the now collected facts to criminalize anarchists.

In April 16 1996 the private rooms of one activist of the anarchist journal *Libertad O Muerte! (LOM)* were searched through as well. In June 1995 LOM did a flyer about a fascist monument in Innsbruck. In December 1995 this stone was smashed by some unknown activists. So the investigation police uses this fact to have a look into the anarchist scene of Innsbruck. The activist was held at the police office headquarters for 5 hours. Later on 2 other anarchists were invited to interrogation as well. A month later all the confiscated material is given back and in Mid of June 1996 the LOM-activists is being informed by the public prosecutor that the accusation against him (of severe damage) was withdrawn due to a lack of evidences. Another example for a repression based on a constructed criminal act.

In the last 2 years such repressions, raids and interrogations have constantly taken place within the anarchist and radical left scene. These here are just 2 examples of how the Austrian state is working in order to diminish our motivation and energy to fight back. However we shouldn't see such repressions disconnected from all the other repression waves going on all over Europe. The different European states are co-operating to reduce to silence and intimidate critical and subversive minds.

Solidarity With All Political Prisoners And The Persecuted!

Anarchist Greetings To All Comrades Living Underground!

State Violence Has No Limits, Neither Has Anarchist Solidarity!

[1] All these law paragraphs have never been used so far in the Austrian history. They are all some sort of relicts out of monarchist, austro-fascist and nationalsocialistic times. They can be compared to the popular German laws §129 and §129a.

[1] The AUF is the FPÖ-police union. The FPÖ is the party of the famous ultra-conservative, right-wing and xenophobic Jörg Haider, which got about 25% of the votes at the last elections. The political line of the FPÖ may be compared to that of the Front National in France. There are strong links between FPÖ-politicians and members on the one side and fascists and neo-nazis on the other side. The main slogan of the FPÖ was some years ago "Austrians first!".

Addresses: Revolutionsbräuhof, Hahngasse 15, 1090 Vienna, Austria (contact address for the Anarchist Bookshop and the committee against repression as well)Libertad O Muerte!, c/o LOM, Postlagernd, 6024 Innsbruck, Austria.

Sources: TATblatt #50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 75; Kultur Zwischendurch #76, 77; plus various flyers and information sheets

Article written by: **HABASLETAT** (from Libertad O Muerte!) c/o LOM, Postlagernd, 6024 Innsbruck, Austria.

OBITUARIES

Georgi Grigoriev (Balkanski) 1906-1996

THE VETERAN BULGARIAN anarchist Georgi Grigoriev died 12 October 1996 at the age of 90 in Sofia. He was an anarchist from the age of 14, and a year later joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Bulgaria (FACB) which had been founded in 1919.

Georgi himself narrowly escaped a murder bid by a Royalist gang in 1925, and was forced to take refuge in Czechoslovakia. He then became an agronomics student in France. Here he joined a large number of Bulgarian anarchists, who had fled viaYugoslavia and Austria. Most of the group settled in Toulouse and this 35-strong group, of which Georgi, under the name of Hadjiev, was a member in conjunction with comrades in Paris and Beziers, carried out an important work of political elaboration and the drafting of a programme for the FACB. Returning to Bulgaria after an amnesty in 1930, Grigoriev and the others organised an underground group in Sofia. The work of agitation culminated in the clandestine national conference of the FACB in 1932, held in the forest, near Lovech. The conference was a major step in the reconstitution of the FACB. But in 1934, the military re-established its grip. Once more, Grigoriev fled to France.

On the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and revolution, the Bulgarian anarchist movement both in exile and underground in Bulgaria, gave their support to the Spanish anarchists. 30 militants managed to defy the pact of non-intervention and entered Spain, either by boat or over the Pyrenees. Grigoriev himself was present as delegate of the FACB at the joint conference of the CNT anarcho-syndicalist union and the specific anarchist organisation, the FAI, in November 1936.

Returning to Bulgaria Grigoriev was arrested in 1939, spending time in prison and then concentration camp until liberation on 19 September 1944. The FACB began to re-organise, but there was only a year's grace before the Communists clamped down on them. At least a thousand militants were put in concentration camps. Grigoriev evaded capture, fleeing to France. Here under the pseudonym of Balkanski he took part in the exile organisation, the Bulgarian Anarchist Union, as well as participating in anarchist activities in France. He published two books in French, a *History of the Anarchist Movement in Bulgaria* and *National Liberation and Social Revolution*. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Grigoriev returned to Bulgaria, where he was reunited with the family that he had not seen for 40 years. He took an active part in the resurgence of the Bulgarian movement and above all in the founding of the Bulgarian Anarchist Federation.

Gerard Ali Khanifar 1950-1997

THIS FRENCH COMRADE of Arab origin died on 21 February 1997. Born on 10 August 1950 he went to schools organised by Michelin for their workers. Because of his North African background, he found school life difficult and he remained forever marked by the humiliations he received there. He started work at Michelin among the 'sans grades' (the unskilled and lowest grade of worker). He became an anarchist in May 1968 when he actively participated in the worker-student liaison. His concern for effective organisation led him to join the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste (ORA). He served several prison terms for his active solidarity with Spanish and Portuguese Anarchists in struggle against Franco and Salazar. His uncompromising militancy put him on many a bosses' blacklist. Self-taught, in 1993 he obtained a diploma at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales thanks to his work on Bakunin *For a Contemporary Reading of Bakunin*. He went on to gain a doctorate with his work on the life and activities of a local French Anarchist. He prepared a work of popularisation on the ideas of Bakunin and contributed to the Biographical Dictionary of the Workers Movement founded by the Anarchist historian Jean Maitron. His industrial activities were both on an international level (solidarity with the British miners in 1984-5) and local (latterly work with the striking lorrydrivers, the unemployed and the casualised theatre workers). Theoretician and activist, he helped set up the Spartacus group of the Federation archiste in Clermont Ferrand in 1994. For his friends and comrades he was warm and, above all, always in solidarity.

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE *continued from page 8*

The companies which made fortunes from telecommunications and publishing in the past have been able to use these resources to expand into the newer media fields and secure substantial stakes e.g. British Telecom's November 1996 achievement of a stake in News Corporation, which ultimately will surely see Murdoch's programmes being piped down BT's cables.

Nonetheless, just as many small alternative publishers have obtained an audience in the past, devices such as camcorders and computers linked via the Internet are allowing a broader and faster distribution of dissenting views. It is only to be expected that those in authority will respond by trying to limit these new forms of expression. In the contest of opposing views of how the world is and could be, what people experience and how it is confirmed or denied by the media is crucial. It is the class struggle within people's minds, the place where it begins. It can only end with the achievement of a real social revolution.

Open Letter

The following is an edited reply to the Turkish and Kurdish anarchists whose open letter was printed in *Organise!* No 45.

Dear 5th May Group

WE HAVE DISCUSSED your proposal and we have decided to support your call for a conference, however we did decide that it would be better if the conference was separate from the Anarchist bookfair, as it is all too easy for just anyone to turn up without any commitment to the aims of such a conference. This would also go for the day after the Bookfair, as we will be having an ACF meeting then. In any case, you may find the Bookfair date is too soon and that there is not time for a long meeting as there are always lots of other meetings happening that day.

The ACF would not support the idea of organisation of a conference being limited to the first three respondents. It should be open to all interested groups. I'm sure that you did mean for all groups to participate on an equal basis, so I think that it would be best to wait and find out whether you get any other positive replies. From a political point of view, the sort of initiatives that you are suggesting has always faced difficulties, as there are anarchists who do believe in class who are anti-organisation. You will be aware the number of anarchists who are involved in class struggle anarchist or anarchist groupings on a national or a world wide scale are relatively small. This is something that the ACF itself is trying to address, as we are currently building stronger links with anarchist communists world wide.

Of those who consider themselves class struggle anarchists, some of these are stuck with localist tendencies, though some links exist between these such as the Northern Anarchist Network , who are predominately class struggle and also comprises of members of the ACF and other organisations like the Solidarity Federation, Subversion. and the Scottish Federation of Anarchists. So there is already some organisation outside of the longer established federations, and this works fairly well in co-ordinating actions like the anti-JSA, Dockers support, ect, and there is also a cross over with single issue groups.

You may not be aware that initiatives like you are proposing have already been tried. There is currently a grouping of revolutionary socialist network, which involves a variety of Marxists and a few anarchists. The ACF is unlikely to support the idea of a confederation of groups with widely differing views about anarchism. In Britain we are closest political with

Subversion who do not wish to be labelled as either anarchists or Marxists. We agree in our objection of syndicalism and of nationalist tendencies, both issues which are an immediate problem in any call for unity in the 'movement'.

So, all though there are some problems for your call for a confederation, in your open letter a point which is perhaps not addressed in the current networks, that is, how to involve comrades from other countries who are currently in Britain. Maybe this question is the one you could bring up by organising a brief meeting at the Bookfair for those who have responded to your letter (and those who may not have seen it) to discuss your proposal further.

In summary, we supports the idea of organising a conference, whether or not this leads to the formation of a confederation. An initial meeting at the Anarchist Bookfair would help get more support for the idea, and would also raise some of the specific probblems that you are having as Turkish and Kurdish anarchists in Britain. Please let me know when you get anymore interest in your proposal and how you want to take this forward.

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A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues No 14-No 43

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ORGANISE!

ORGANISE! IS THE national magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF). *Organise!* is a quarterly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals. All articles in the magazine are by ACF members unless signed. Some reflect ACF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them.. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.). Deadlines for next issue are 1st October for features and reviews, and 8th October for letters and news.

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Address: *http://burn.ucsd.edu/~acf/*
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Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists. For contacts :

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Brighton: Brighton ACF, c/o Unemployed Centre, Tilbury Place, Brighton, Sussex
Newcastle: ACF, PO Box ITA, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1TA
London and all other areas: ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street London, E1 7QX

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Want to Join the ACF? Want To Find Out More?

☐ I agree with the ACF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
☐ I would like more information about the Anarchist Communist Federation.
☐ Please put me on the ACF's mailing list.

Name.....

Address.....

Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to: ACF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL.

GANDHI

***ORGANISE!* IS STARTING a new series, *Myths and Legends,* which will take a look at various 'Sacred Cows', diagnose BSE and recommend culling. We kick off with a look at the 'saint' of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi.**

Mahatma Gandhi is often cited by pacifists as the shining example of how non-violent civil disobedience works successfully. Unfortunately, these paeans of praise leave out a close study of Gandhi's role in the Indian struggle for 'independence', and just as importantly, who were his class allies in that struggle.

By 1919 the Indian capitalist class had decided they wanted independence from the British rulers. However, as can be imagined, the British were reluctant to agree to this and a propaganda campaign for withdrawal had no effect. Indian workers and peasants also resented the yoke of British domination. In response to a mass rally at Amritsar in the Punjab, General Dyer ordered the machine-gunning of the crowd, resulting in over 300 dead and many thousands wounded.

The Indian capitalist class came to the conclusion that after the failure of the propaganda campaign, mass action was necessary to gain independence. However, they were haunted by the spectre of the Russian revolution, which had progressed from democratic demands to outright social revolution. They received the answer to their prayers in Gandhi, who had already led several campaigns of civil disobedience in South Africa against the racist laws there. He thus had a certain credibility, and was also not hindered by any identification with any particular region of the sub-continent.

TRUSTEES

His theories of civil disobedience were rooted in Hindu theology. He preached the unity of classes among Indians, the rich to be "trustees" to the poor. This message of class unity was vital if he was to create an alliance between the industrialists and the rich peasants. Indian capitalists enthusiastically welcomed these ideas, and he was financed by some of the leading industrialists in West India, the Sarabhais, textile magnates in the Gujarat, and the Birlas, second largest industrialist group in all of India. Millions of rupees were given to him over a period of 25 years. The rich peasants and shopkeepers also provided a pool of activists for his Congress Party. Gandhi, due to his simplicity of life style, was able to mobilise peasants and workers behind him in the cause of nationalism, where the Indian politicians in top hats and morning suits would have found it very difficult. He facilitated a cross-cross alliance for nationalism.

Gandhi had advocated his doctrines of non-violence from early on. This did not stop him from supporting the British in 1899 in the Boer War, volunteering to help them and organising an ambulance corps. As he said, "As long as the subjects owe allegiance to a state, it is their clear duty generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support, to the acts of the state". When Gandhi was organising a mass march in South Africa in 1913, to obtain rights for Indians there, the white railway workers went on strike over pay and conditions. Gandhi immediately cancelled his march, saying that civil resisters should not take advantage of a government's difficulty .On the outbreak of the First World War, Gandhi actively recruited for the British war effort, despite his 'pacifism'. On the outbreak of the Second World War, he publicly pledged not to embarrass the British, and would lend moral support to the Allies.

OBEY

Each of Gandhi's mass campaigns of civil disobedience (1920-1922, 1930-1933,1942) took place when British capitalism was in trouble. Each crisis broke a few more links with Britain. They also strengthened the Indian capitalists. Fair enough, one can argue, it was good tactics to attack British imperialism when it was in difficulties. What Gandhi failed to do was tie the second campaign to a massive working class upsurge, in conjunction with a mass campaign against a British Parliamentary Commission touring India (both in 1928). Instead he waited till 1930 to launch the campaign. He rejected the idea of teaming workers struggles with a campaign for British withdrawal because he was an advocate of peace between the different classes of India.

Gandhi never questioned the concept of "legality" either. He told his supporters to obey the law and he always insisted that the British had a "legal right" to arrest them. Once arrested, the campaigners were told to cut themselves off from everything outside and passively await their release.

Nehru "What are we going to do with these damn workers?"
Gandhi "I know, I'll hit them over the head with my non-violence crap - that'll do the trick!"

When in April 1946 Indian sailors mutinied in Bombay and Indian soldiers refused to fire on them, Gandhi's Congress Party refused to support them, which effectively broke the mutiny. Workers demonstrated their support in mass strikes, and the thought of workers and rank-and-file soldiers combining in action must have been troubling to Gandhi.

Gandhi's use of the Hindu religion as justification for civil disobedience was disastrous. Not only did it alienate the members of other religions in India, principally the Muslims, but it legitimised the caste system. Gandhi opposed one caste oppressing another, but he never came out in favour of the abolition of the caste system itself. Many "untouchables" were alienated in this way. The massacres that took place after independence were at least partly due to Gandhi's reluctance to include the Muslims within his Congress Party.

Although Gandhi admitted that he had read certain libertarian thinkers, principally Kropotkin, he had very little in common with their ideas. While Kropotkin was committed to the end of class society, Gandhi never repudiated either the class or the caste system, and never tried to reach out to the working class, in India or internationally. For that matter, his Puritanism, his dislike of sexuality, his cult of martyrdom, have very little to do with militant anarchism.

ORGANISE!

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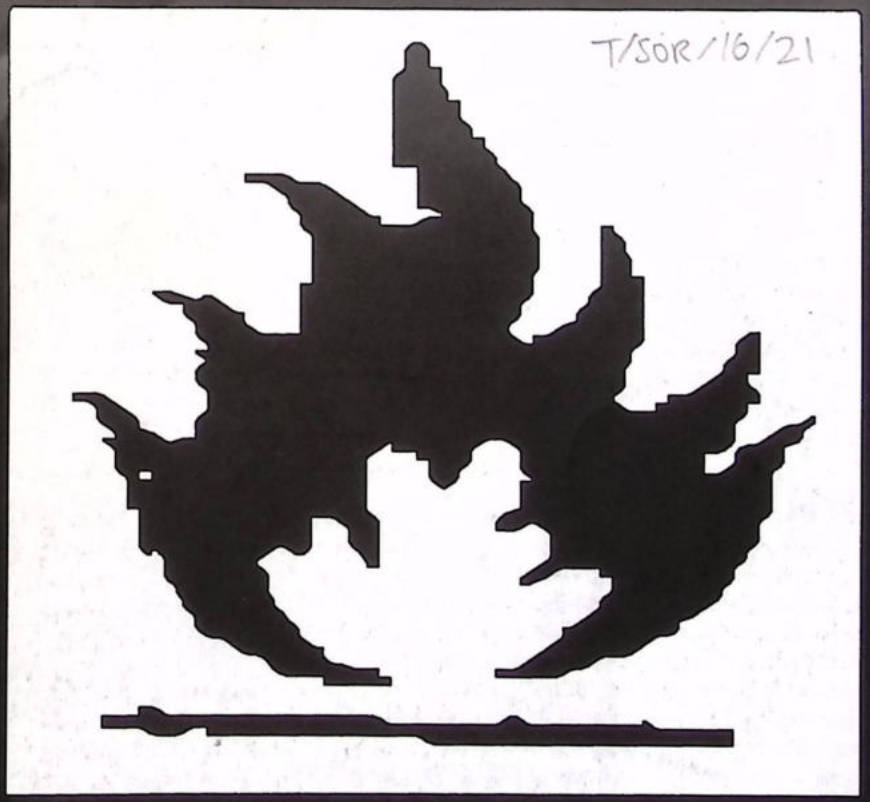
FANNING THE FLAMES



ALSO INSIDE:

MILLENNIUM MADNESS

REVOLUTIONARY UNIONS?

ATTACKS ON CLAIMANTS

MYTHS AND LEGENDS: HAILE SELASSIE

FRENCH UNEMPLOYED FIGHT BACK

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

Aims and Principles

1 The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class women and black people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class.

The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc.).

Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce.

The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow.

Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

No War But The Class War

As we go to press, it looks as though a negotiated "peace" has been obtained by the United Nations with Iraq, ruling out the likelihood of bombing raids by the US-British alliance. But the sanctions continue, and it is these sanctions which have caused more deaths than the 1991 Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm, through starvation and disease. Many parts of the Iraqi civilian infrastructure are still in ruins, medical supplies are scarce, and there are many water-borne diseases circulating. The end of the 1991 Gulf War did not mean peace, just as the negotiated settlement does not mean peace. The suffering continues for the mass of the Iraqi people, whilst the ruling elite continues to lead a life of luxury. The sanctions remain in place, backed up by a massive military presence, and the Anglo-American alliance retaining the right to take military action against Iraq whenever it feels necessary.

In the run-up to the possible war, Britain and the USA mounted massive propaganda campaigns, highlighting the massive and deadly arsenal of chemical and biological weapons that the Saddam regime was supposed to possess. But, as came to light, "United Nations inspectors do not know where Saddam Hussein's chemical or biological weapons are hidden, or even whether they exist in usable form, Whitehall sources admitted..." (Guardian 5 Feb). Both Britain and the US were aware that "public opinion" was against any new Gulf war, and that massive anti-war mobilisations could take place, just as they did last time, they are also aware of a reluctance by its former allies to take part in any further wars which is motivated by political logic. The European bloc led by France and Germany needs to build its own influence in the Middle East. It chooses to do this through "diplomacy", as the military option has already been taken by the USA. The British government's backing for the USA show the contradictory position it is in, as it seeks to both be a close ally of the US and be influential in the European Union. For our part, we must work to stop any of the power blocs' plans for war and mass destruction through mass mobilisations on an international level. No War But the Class War!

IRELAND - is the 'peace process' collapsing?

The 'Peace Process' in the North of Ireland is in serious crisis once again. As *Organise!* goes to print Sinn Fein are beginning a suspension from the multi-party talks, following Unionist and British government assertions that the IRA has breached the Mitchell Principles of non-violence. Sinn Fein, for their part, have denied both that they are representatives of the IRA (!) and that the IRA "cessation" has been ended. They talk of returning to the table "on their own terms". Whilst the Process has never been exactly stable, why does it appear to have gone seriously awry?

The assassination by the Irish National Liberation Army of Loyalist Volunteer Force fuhrer Billy 'King Rat' Wright in the Maze prison on December 27th marked the turning point. Wright's death was used by the LVF as an excuse to launch a campaign of sectarian murder against working class Catholics. The notion, however, that the murders of the likes of taxi drivers Larry Brennan and John McColgan were somehow merely 'revenge' or 'reactive' killings is very wide of the mark. Rather, the LVF, with the assistance of elements in the UDA, used the death of their leader to intensify their sectarian murder campaign which had already taken the lives of numerous innocent Catholics during 1997, and to attempt to wreck the talks process. Whether indeed, Wright's death was connived at by forces within the state, for whom the breakdown of the 'Peace Process' would be welcomed, remains to be seen.

What is clear, however, is that anti-'Peace Process' elements on both sides have had an impact out of proportion to their (albeit growing) numbers.

Fundamentalist

On the Loyalist side, the LVF, who apparently rejected overtures from the Ulster Volunteer Force to rejoin the fold shortly before Wright's death, have been recruiting outside of their Portadown base and have obviously attracted UDA /Ulster Freedom Fighters. A working relationship has developed which we probably haven't seen the last of. The LVF has no 'political' wing because Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, with its rejection of the 'Peace Process' and its old time Protestant fundamentalism, serves that function quite nicely.

The LVF has vowed to take the fight against the 'sell-out' of Ulster to the 26 counties and has already attempted an unsuccessful bombing of a Gardai station in Dromad, County Louth. Its main field of operation will, however, remain the six counties.

Meanwhile, on the Republican side, tension is certainly rising as dissension on the 'Peace Process' grows. The INLA claimed responsibility for the killing of UDA commander Jim Guiney

on January 19th and has reaffirmed its commitment to the armed struggle, despite some support for a tactical cease-fire amongst the Irish Republican Socialist Party leadership. The INLA, however, are not the main concern of those in the 'unarmed strategy' Sinn Fein leadership. The main 'threat' to the leadership of Sinn Fein lies in the IRA itself and the growth of dissent amongst the rank and file of the Republican Movement.

Internal Settlement

The likelihood of, at best, some sort of 'Internal Settlement' featuring continued partition but new, cross-border bodies with limited but tangible powers and a 'reforming' of the Northern Ireland statelet, has led to elements within both Sinn Fein and the IRA rejecting the 'Peace Process'. This years Ard Fheis of Sinn Fein may see these elements attempt to openly challenge the leadership. At the forefront of these will be the 32 County Sovereignty Committee, who count Bernadette Sands McKevitt, sister of 1981 hunger-striker Bobby Sands, as one of their spokespersons, but other critics of the leadership are developing and the possibility of a split, if not immediately then later in the year, is not unthinkable.. Where such a split would go from there is not so obvious, the only ready-made alternative being the abstentionist Republican Sinn Fein.

The bombings of Moira and Portadown at the end of February , like the massive car-bomb in Enniskillen on January 24th, would appear to be the work of the Continuity Irish Republican Army, the paramilitary force associated with Republican Sinn Fein. Although no group has claimed responsibility and the IRA has made a point of distancing itself from the bombings, the possibility exists that the CIRA was assisted by elements recently resigned from the IRA or even still nominally part of it. If this is the case then the potential split in Sinn Fein could be mirrored in the IRA. The option for the pro 'Process' majority then would be to either silence the 'splitters' or face their probable exclusion form the talks and, therefore, the end of the 'Peace Process' in its current form. The likelihood of a 'settlement', of whatever kind, by May 1998 is not exactly strong.

Whatever develops, one thing remains certain, that is that when the gunfire dies down and the rubble is cleared away the bodies on the floor will continue to be the working class of Ireland and not those of its exploiters and leaders.

Note: The Workers Solidarity Movement and Organise!-IWA have organised an event, titled Ideas And Action, to be held in Dublin on March 28th 1997. Details from: P.O. Box 1528 Dublin 8. Ireland. Organise!-IWA can be contacted at P.O.Box 505, Belfast. BT12 6BQ. N.Ireland.

The End of the Liverpool Dockers Strike

AFTER 2 YEARS 300 sacked Liverpool dockers agreed at a mass meeting by a majority of 4-1 to accept payoffs of £28,000 from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company, their employer. 80 dockers employed by Torside company, whose sacking had set off the strike will receive no payment. These pay-offs will mean that the strikers will receive no Jobseekers Allowance until each claimants savings fall below £8,000. Many are in debt after 2 years of strike, and will have to pay off mortgages etc.

When the strike first started, the dockers expected a massive show of solidarity from other workers. Recently the TGWU union in which the dockers are members, with Bill Morris at its head, sabotaged all solidarity action. Any motions for positive action from TGWU branches were ruled out of order by the union's president. In the New Year it was revealed that the dispute appeal fund was almost out of money, and that international solidarity actions had not escalated. 60 dockers had already accepted the offer, and since the last ballot in December, 20 more had accepted. Unfortunately, this is another defeat in a long line of defeats for the working class. This defeat was actively connived at by both the TGWU and by Labour. Indeed, the Mersey Docks Company expressed admiration for the union and for Bill Morris. The TGWU bureaucrats threatened the dockers that if they did not go along with the bosses' demands they would be sacked.

The dockers fought long and hard for two years. Local carworkers at Ford and Vauxhall failed to back the dockers. The police viciously attacked the mass pickets on several occasions. Above all, the dockers had to take on the union as well as the employers and the State. Now that the dockers have accepted the deal the T&G is being invited back into the docks. This is a sign of gratitude from the employers, and shows that they are confident that the union will police the workforce.

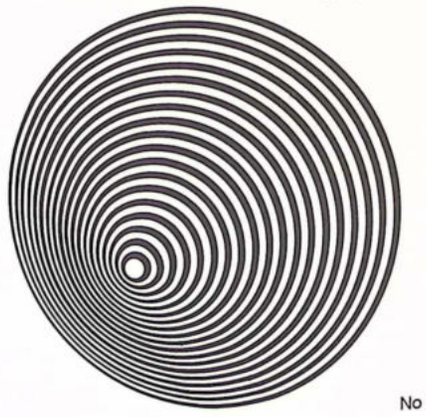
The T&G leadership actively sabotaged solidarity on an international level by sending letters abroad saying that the strike was not official and that any action would threaten the T&G. Because they realised that they were not getting support from the unions, the dockers began to seek the support of social movements outside of traditional labourist politics. For example they gained the support of Reclaim the Streets and other ecological groups. This was an important step in breaking with the old ways of carrying on a strike, both paralysing and ineffective. Such tactics can lead on to globalisation of struggle-that is a realisation that all struggles are connected and that there is a common enemy-capitalism and the State.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

THE MILLENNIUM DOME is a huge construction being built on derelict land on the banks of the river Thames in South London. It is a prestige project, effectively a re-run of the Great Exhibition of 1850 (history repeating itself as farce) which trumpeted the wonders of the Industrial Revolution, and of British Capitalism. This time around the structure is only intended to be temporary, lasting 25-30 years, and it will be a snip at a mere 758 million pounds.

Why oh Why?

The Dome will 'celebrate the Millennium' - the year 2000 (though a number of people argue that it falls in the year 2001!), and promote Britain plc and New Labour. British Capital will be promoted to investors and consumers abroad in terms of 'look at our high quality, low cost products, and skilled but cheap labour'. For the punters at home the main message is that of 'One Nation - a peoples' Britain where everyone is equal as a citizen/consumer. Accordingly, everyone must work together to make Britain plc profitable - workers and bosses, all political parties, all races and religions - in order that they all profit, though not equally of course. The Millennium project itself is a shining example of this, it is run by a cross-party committee headed by the prominent Tory Michael Heseltine (ex-deputy Prime Minister under Major). Appropriately, the Dome is the pet project of Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio aka the government's chief spin doctor. It is significant that one of the main places visited by the committee members for inspiration has been Disneyland in Florida, which has been described as 'a marvel of technology applied to mass psychology', which is what the dome aspires to. Similarly the designers want to appeal to people's hopes for future worlds which are different but essentially similar - like Blair's Labour and Major's Tories- or was it the other way around?. The project is an important part of the spin doctoring strategy, which consists of misinformation and managing the news in order to maintain and increase power and influence. It is characterised by the triumph of form over content - good-looking (sic) smiley politicians selling politics-as-product, dressing more-of-the - same policies with words such as *new* and *people's*, with the underlying message that they were better and fairer. What are the reasons for this 'Americanisation' of power politics? It is partly a consequence of technology which atomises people e.g

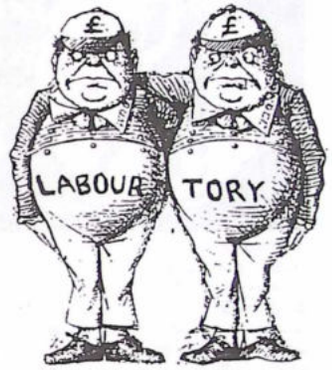


elections campaigns are increasingly fought by television. This is itself political however, in that technologies form and content (use) are the product of the dominant social and economic forces in society. More importantly spin-doctoring is an essential part of the ruling class strategy. In the latter days of the Tory government a significant proportion of the ruling class, exemplified by media mogul Rupert Murdoch, decided that the Tories had lost their ability to manage the population for Capital having lost their authority as a result of pigs in the trough and other scandals. A new regime, different and cosmetically fairer was needed in order that it would have the authority to administer the harsh medicine to the workers that Capital required (workfare, benefits cuts, hospital closures, rail privatisation etc.).

Opposition

The Millennium dome project continues to be controversial, arousing much criticism and opposition on a number of fronts. The huge cost is a major factor, for a temporary building , at a time of huge cuts and attacks on the working class and poor with attacks on unemployed, single mothers, people with disabilities etc. The secrecy surrounding the proposed contents of a 'public' project, the artistic/cultural merits of exhibits, whether there will be a religious theme - yep, Christianity, the desirability or otherwise of commercial and nationalist elements. We are totally opposed to the whole kit and caboodle. We applaud the direct action of the Reclaim The Streets protesters who occupied the construction site for several hours late last year. We should support all such direct action against this and other prestige projects such as Olympic Stadia and contrast the obscene waste of resources with poverty and suffering in a world of plenty. May the dome be Labour's and the Ruling Classes' Titanic!

Labour's welfare warfare



OUR STATEMENT IN the last couple of issues of *Organise!* that Labour would start to attack working class people almost immediately in particular with a full frontal assault on welfare benefits might have surprised some. Now events have shown that indeed Labour has this in mind and is acting very rapidly to carry out its attacks.

Labour is planning to axe maternity benefits. It disguises this attack behind the propaganda that women earning £1 million a year should not get maternity benefits. In reality this is aimed at women in ordinary white collar jobs.

They are also planning to cut disability benefits by forcing the disabled into jobs that would be totally unsuitable. When Harriet Harman became Secretary of State for Social Security she refused to increase incapacity benefits, probably amongst the lowest in the EU. Now the disabled are being forced back to work with camouflage propaganda about personal advisers talking with the disabled-threatening and bullying them.

Another part of the attack on welfare benefits is the old lie much used by the Tories, now dusted off and polished up by Labour that fraud is taking place on a massive scale with the benefits system. Labour plucked the figure of 17% from the air. This figure was supplied by the Department of Social Security itself, when other surveys suggest around 2% fraud. At the same time big businessmen, including people like Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General are taxdodging by salting their money away in offshore trusts-perhaps as much as £96 billion.

Labour will cut single parent benefits further scapegoating a section of the working class that had already been scapegoated under the Tories. Labour knows that a large part of the social security budget goes on pensions. This is likely to increase with an increasing proportion of elderly in the population. Labour will attempt to close down State pensions and force people to take out private pensions. Many will find this difficult to pay, already finding it hard to make ends meet.

Slave labour

Labour's welfare to work scheme through the New Deal is designed to provide cheap labour to the employers through training, education and job opportunities. Those who refuse to be forced into derisorily low paid jobs will have their benefits removed. Many of these involve sending people to work for charities, councils, or for supermarkets. This will provide slave labour workers and threaten the wages of those already working in these sectors. The education part will mean NVQ Level 2 qualifications at further education colleges. This means training for semi-skilled jobs. Those already signing on and taking NVQ Level 3 will only be allowed to continue if it is thought that there will be "job prospects". 69,000 enrolled on A Level and Access courses will find themselves being forced onto these schemes. These education schemes would be totally shoddy, with little chance of a job at the end, and with a direct aim of camouflaging unemployment figures.

Labour is hiding these attacks behind the propaganda of "Radical Welfare Reform" "New Deal" "New Opportunities". These soap ad jingles disguise a brutal attack on the welfare system as does the statement that "The country can't afford the massive spending on the welfare state". In fact Britain is the third lowest in the EU league of 11 countries' expenditure on health and welfare benefits. Labour wants to make sure the British bosses have to fork out less for benefits.

At the same time Labour has signalled its policy on wages. Public sector workers-teachers, health workers etc.- were due to get a pay rise of 3.8%. With 3.7% inflation and the cost of living soaring, even this would be pathetic. Labour intervened to stop the Pay Review Bodies paying out, and ordered that 2% only be paid from April. The rest to be paid in December. This means that 8 months worth of an already measly rise will be taken off wages. This is the biggest pay delay ever in public sector history. Nurses will lose £5 a week and teachers £50 a month.

In addition, all pay awards will be what Gordon Brown calls self-financing. No extra money will be given by the Government and schools and hospitals will make the pay awards by cutting elsewhere. This was already carried out by the previous Conservative government resulting in the

loss of 250,000 public sector jobs since 1993.

Blair intends to make this a signal to workers in the private sector and to all public sector workers not covered by the Pay Review Bodies. Unison, the union representing many public sector workers has put forward a demand for a 10% pay rise or an increase of £1,000 (whichever is greater). This is due to outrage among public sector workers. In fact, it will do nothing to push this demand and the Unison leaders are ready to accept the PRB decisions. Unison will attempt to sabotage any industrial action by pointing to the implementation of a national minimum wage as a solution. It will also point out that David Blunkett, threatened to ban strikes in the public sector.

We cannot rely on the unions. Now is the time to think about organising independent action outside the control of the unions. Let's wipe the smug grins off the faces of the Labour government.

Three strikes and you're out!

THE FOLLOWING IS an interview with a member of Edinburgh Claimants, Jim, about attempted police repression of the Three Strikes (anti-Job Seekers Allowance) campaign; on the 21st of January a claimant was found guilty of Breach of the Peace and sentenced to 150 hours of community service. His offence (sic) had been to deliver a 3 strikes warning letter to a Benefits Office Official at High Riggs Unemployment benefit office in Edinburgh. The Sheriff (judge) called it 'a sinister offence' and said that he was considering a jail sentence; in his summing up he called the campaign a 'premeditated and illegal attempt to undermine the welfare benefits system'.

ORGANISE!: Can you tell us about the context of the Three Strikes campaign?

JIM: There has been a continuous independent claimants presence in Edinburgh since the early to mid 1980's around the Edinburgh Unemployed Workers Centre and Lothian Claimants Union. The Centre successfully occupied by claimants opposing its closure, and claimants established a presence, particularly at unemployed benefits offices (UBO's).

Tens of thousands of leaflets were distributed, consisting of practical information for claimants, for example about how to resist Restart - Snooper Harassment and Actively Seeking Work measures. Although the numbers of activists involved have been small, they have gained the respect of many claimants and have had a big influence. The idea that people should be accompanied at interviews, for example. The Three Strikes campaign began in early 1996, and has struck a chord with unemployed people, though it has been unpopular with Union and Labour party bureaucrats because it gives claimants power. The underlying idea is that this should be part of building a claimants' counter power in all areas of social life, to counter oppression and exploitation (see previous recent issues of *Organise!*, and issue 19 of Subversion). The first warning letters were given out in 1996. The information received from claimants showed the same names of bullying Benefit Office officials kept recurring, e.g. Alistair Mathieson, client adviser at Torphicen Street UBO in Edinburgh. This slimebag forced claimants onto Jobplan and Restart courses, showed political bias during a restart interview (quoting Michael Portillo), emotionally abusing claimants, sometimes reducing them to tears. Following 2 warnings there was a 3 Strike demonstration against him. Fifteen people took over the Benefit Office, went to his desk and photographed him. Mathieson responded by running away. The demonstrators left the office before the police arrived. Mathieson's photo was flyposted throughout the city with a list of his sins, the posters urged people to refuse to be interviewed by him. The campaign has received quite a lot of coverage in the local press over the years. It has not been sympathetic, but claimants can read between the lines, and contact addresses and phone numbers have been quoted at times. The campaign has been important, but it is only one direct action tactic to build claimants power; complementary would be a phone tree consisting of 30-50 people. They would be 'dole-busters' who were available at 24 hours notice to actively support claimants facing harassment. I believe such a phone tree has been developed in Brighton.

ORGANISE! What has the reaction of the authorities to Three Strikes been?

JIM: The benefit office authorities have been very worried by it. Edinburgh claimants have been very involved in supporting the Liverpool Dockers struggle locally. The PTC (a civil service union which is mostly for managers) have consistently written to the support group urging them to get rid of us from the group. The author of the letters is Bernie Jaster, a benefit office manager and real nasty. The police have been showing an interest for some time; they have contacted people who they think are involved, going to their houses and trying to interview them. In Nottingham of course they have actually carried out raids on people's houses. There have been questions raised in the Houses of Parliament about 3 strikes; the answer maintained that Groundswell made anonymous and illegal threats against those carrying out JSA sanctions. Police advice and support has been exemplary it says, and appears to have helped deter Groundswell from implementing their threat to harm staff. The 3 strikes policy against Mathieson was described disapprovingly from the platform at the CPSA (Civil and Public Servants Association) trade union conference.

ORGANISE! What have relationships generally with Benefits Office staff been like?

JIM: We have continuously striven to maintain contacts with UBO workers. The best of them seem to have left now; up to half of those left are on temporary contracts. Most of them now seem to have little idea about claimants situation or the possible effects of what they are asked to do. They are raised on the idea that claimants are the enemy.

ORGANISE! How do you react to the outcome of the court case this week ? (February 11th 1998)

JIM: Four hours after the verdict, 20 claimants and supporters carried out a 3rd strike action against Marianne MacDonald, a Project Work interviewer at High Riggs, and her manager Mr Laird. The demonstrators, all wearing masks of MacDonald's face, stormed into the benefit office in central Edinburgh. They carried posters of her with the slogan NO ONE LIKES A BULLY.

continues on page 12

French unemployed organise and fight

"Fed up with unemployment! We want to work"
Old slogans from the movement

A MASS WAVE of occupations of unemployment benefit offices swept through France in December 1997 continuing well into the New Year. *Organise!* takes a look at this welcome resistance.

This phenomenon should be looked at in detail as it should provide lessons and examples to all unemployed who are looking to defend themselves in Britain and round the rest of the world. As the French magazine Courant Alternatif, the paper of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire noted in a February editorial: "Once more, libertarians were omnipresent in the action."

The movement of occupations began in December when some local unemployed groups, as well as the national unemployed co-ordination Agir contre le chomage! (Act against unemployment)-AC! occupied the offices of Unedic/Assedic -the equivalent of supplementary benefit- in Arras in northern France and Marseilles in the south. They demanded an immediate payout of 1,500 (francs (£150) for the long term unemployed.

A new left government under Lionel Jospin came to power in France last year. Apart from his own Socialist Party, the cabinet included 4 ministers who are members of the Communist Party. The new government promised the creation of 700,000 jobs, 350,000 of them in the public sector. The private sector promise of unemployment failed to get off the ground straightaway, as the private sector bosses refused to release finance, and the State would not subsidise them. Similarly a government promise of a universal 35 hour week has met with fierce resistance from the employers.

The election of the left destroyed any remaining illusions among the unemployed that anything would be done by the State to tackle unemployment. This is why unlike the usual demobilisation in France after elections of left governments, this new movement, starting out with small numbers, quickly increased in size and militancy and continues to be active. This should be compared with the social movement of November-December 1995. This time it is a government of the Left in power, and as a result the usual manoeuvres of the Left to demobilise any social movements have been that little bit more difficult to carry out.

Enough is enough!

The Unedic is a joint government/union body headed up by Nicole Notat, leader of the CFDT union (noted for its "radicality" and talk of " self-management" in the 70s and for a long while a close accomplice of the Socialists). Notat refused to pay the sum demanded by the unemployed activists. Conditions have deteriorated rapidly for the unemployed in the last 2 years, to the point where many are not far off of almost complete destitution.

The actions were set off by the unemployed committees of the CGT (large union central controlled by the Communist Party) in the Marseillles area. But this does not imply a manipulation by the Communists. Rather it was a movement from the base that was taken up by multiple unemployed groups and activists, including the CNT (Anarchosyndicalist union) and by many anarchist/libertarian militants as well as by those in no group or organisation.

Assedic offices everywhere were occupied with large united demonstrations of the unemployed and employed in many main towns. The demand for a payout was raised to 3,00 francs, and demands were then put forward for a rise in benefits for all of the equivalent of £150, with a new benefit for the under-25s, who receive no benefits at all.

The old carrot and stick tactic that the Left in power/the unions had used to finally demobilise both the lorry drivers strike (late autumn 1997) and the struggle of the sans papiers (immigrants without official stay permits) did not immediately work this time. The movement put at the head of its priorities the human and social factors, refusing to be taken in by various economic arguments (one union leader said that the unemployed were taking jobs from the employed!). In certain areas, the unemployed broke with the old schema of trade unionism: corporatism, strike, negotiations, end of struggle.

Indeed, the frontiers of what was "possible" were pushed back considerably, with hundreds of buildings occupied day and night, and groups of unemployed demanding and taking food in the supermarkets and in the most posh restaurants! All of this might be seen as symbolic, but demonstrates the determination and willpower of a social movement, weak numerically, but which is a great novelty in a situation where most workplace struggles are defensive and well controlled by the unions.

If the movement is weak in numbers, this is hardly surprising. Hundreds of thousands are today totally defeated in their daily life where survival is their main preoccupation.

For those who did engage in struggle, for many there was a massive widening of horizons leading to the questioning of the capitalist system in its totality. Yes, when one is out of work, one has time to become totally depressed, but one also has time to *think*. If waged workers have the "muscle" to potentially back up their struggles, they are also the victims of paralysing alienation. Hence a paradox in both waged and

unwaged sectors. This vulgar economism is an enemy of all revolutions.

The new demands were met with an offer of the equivalent of £50 million for retraining and a promise that 216,000 unemployed would get additional transport subsidies of about £3 a week. This was met with an escalation in the number of occupations. The government then decided to give out £100million in unemployment benefit. Again this was met with derision. This meant the princely sum of £30 per person! Now Jospin talked about his commitments to the European Union, and refused to give any more money.

First sops, then cops

The riot cops were sent in, evicting the occupations in an euphemistic "evacuation". Up to this time, the Communist Ministers were saying things like: "The first measures taken....make good sense", supporting the sops given out by the government. Now it was: "The Assedics must rediscover the possibility of fulfilling their role"- in other words, "riot police, charge!" For their part, the Greens also supporting the Left government played it both ways, reflecting their minor influence on the government. One Green leader visited occupying unemployed and denounced police attacks whilst another said he was in solidarity with the unemployed whilst supporting the government at the same time. Once again, as in the last few strikes and social movements the extreme right Front National failed to offer an opinion apart from remarking in their paper that the unemployed were profiteers who lacked decency.

For their part, the Trotskyists put forward the usual transitional demands, seeking to limit the movement to the "possible". Some of their organisations are deeply implicated in support for the Left government. For example, Lutte Ouvriere, a Trot group with several thousand members, denounced anarchists as provocateurs, in line with the talk of the Communists/CGT who constantly droned on about "casseurs" (breakers) and uncontrollables. For its part the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International, was doing its little wheelings and dealings, in line with eventually joining the Socialist Party en masse. One of its leaders, Aguiton, also a leader of AC! and the SUD union, had several meetings with Cambadelis, number two in the Socialist Party, and an eminent Trotskyist himself (in a different faction) assuring him that " we are not looking for a crisis".

Now the CGT union moved to fulfil its role as saboteur of struggle. On January 27th they called out over 20,000 people in 3 separate demonstrations in Paris- unemployed, railworkers, road maintenance workers. All demonstrations were concerned with unemployment, but the Communists made sure that they marched in different parts of the capital.

The radicalism of the movement was shown in occupations of Socialist Party offices, in the blocking of railway lines to stop the TGV high speed trains, in the questioning of work itself. During a demonstration in Paris on 17th January, which brought out 25,000, a meeting under the banner *We Want Shit Work paid with Crumbs* a group of people whipped themselves whilst demanding work at any price. Some of their slogans were *Work, no wages and overtime -One solution, exploitation,- Bosses join us, your slaves are in the street,- The unions are our friends, they have never betrayed us,- 35 hours a day.* The meeting went from 50 to 400. After this demonstrators broke a police blockade of an occupied building, occupied a shopping centre and forced one of the swankiest Parisian restaurants La Coupole to provide food. On other occasions attempts by the AC! bureaucrats to negotiate were thwarted by mass meetings. At many mass meetings, people questioned the whole nature of waged work.

Demobilisation?

In towns like Nantes the high school students began to take part in the struggle. A thousand marched to join the unemployed in Nantes and took part in an occupation. The Act-Up committees (organising around AIDs and HIV) took part in most of the actions calling for the same benefits for AIDs sufferers as for other claimants.

The number of anarchists/libertarians involved in the movement was far from negligible (for example 400 people in the Federation Anarchiste contingent on a Lyons demo). Beyond satisfaction at the good health of different libertarian organisations was there the influence to create a self-organised movement of unemployed and those in temporary work, independent of the parties and the State, leading to the creation of a movement of social resistance capable of creating a new society?

The Left government has put forward its plans for a 35 hour week that it says will solve unemployment. It hopes to introduce this by the year 2000 and to encourage bosses to create jobs. But in actual fact the bill does not mean that pay will not be cut in line with reduction of hours, that 35 hours will be compulsory, that job creation will not be paid out of taxes rather than by the bosses. In addition, the 35 hours will be "flexible". It will be calculated annually, so that one week you might work 60 hours, and another 10, which suits the needs of the bosses very well!

The movement is being demobilised on this 35-hour promise. The Communists are busy winding down the movement. AC! and other unemployed organisations feel smug that they have been received by those in power, have begun to be integrated into negotiation structures, and will go along with these manoeuvres At Marseilles where the action first started, this is already under way, but as we write other towns have seen an increase in the strength of the movement. The government will both hope to destroy the movement with the help of its allies in the Communist Party and the unions, and with brute force. Already a member of the Federation Anarchiste,

"Share wealth. Live differently with or without work"
New slogans emerge

Christophe Fetat, has been arrested in Lille for taking part in actions. If the movement does come to an end, what needs to be built upon by anarchists/libertarians is a radicalisation of those involved, and the establishment of occupied buildings that can continue to service the unemployed, operated by autonomous committees of unemployed/those in temporary work outside of the control of the parties.

And in Germany

After the German government announced the highest unemployment rate since the war, 4.8 million-14% of those able to work- a mass wave of demonstrations effected 200 cities and towns and involving 40,000 people in early February. Contacts between French and German unemployed have been established with the French giving advice from their own experiences.

STOP PRESS: As we go to press, we hear of the following.

6th February Occupation of public transport building initiated by CNT in Paris. Building surrounded and 80 (!) arrested by police armed with assault rifles. After identity checks all released.

11th February 150 unemployed/temporary contract workers arrive at the Cash Converters store. This scummy business buys the property of the poor who urgently need money, at derisory prices, and sell it to other poor people at a profit! That's the market for you! The objective of the 150 was to bring the goods out on the pavement to distribute it free. The police attacked violently. 40 arrests. 30 released in the evening, the rest kept overnight in cells and released the following morning. Possibility of prosecutions. Media imposes blackout on many actions. At Poitiers police physically attack occupying unemployed (5 Feb.) Growing radicalisation as many unemployed see the role of the Left and of the police.

Friends and Neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these publications:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow G1 5QP, Scotland.

Subversion. Quarterly magazine of group of same name, with politics close to ours. Free copy from Dept 10, 1 Newton St, Manchester M1 1HW.

Collection Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

The Union Makes us Strong? Syndicalism: A critical analysis

We conclude our three part analysis on Syndicalism.

CRITICISM OF SYNDICALIST methods from anarchists, starting with Malatesta, has not been necessarily due to any anti-organisational tendency or sympathy with 'Marxism'. In Europe, the militants of the Dielo Truda group of Russian anarchists in exile began to question the identification of anarchism with syndicalism and the attitude towards syndicalism which libertarians had historically taken. Their Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (1926) described "revolutionary syndicalism" as "only one of the forms of revolutionary class struggle" which, of itself contains no "determining theory" . They suggested that anarcho-syndicalism had failed to fully "anarchise" unionism and that a specific anarchist organisation was needed to do this. They also argued that such a specific anarchist organisation should attempt to "exercise theoretical influence on all trade unions" since "...if trade unionism does not find in anarchist theory a support in opportune times it will turn, whether we like it or not, to the ideology of a political statist party." To a great extent the latter claim can be seen to be true when the evolution of unions such as the French CGT, or the exodus of syndicalist militants into Bolshevik parties, is taken into consideration.

The Organisational Platform did not however have a great deal to say about the function of syndicalism or trade unionism for that matter. The experience of the council movement in Germany and the various ideas that came out of it appear to have passed them by.

Simultaneously, the Japanese anarchist communist theoretician Hatta Shuzo was arguing that syndicalism, being a reflection of the structure of industrial capitalism, ran the risk of replicating hierarchical social relations, particularly through a continued division of labour.

He argued that, because syndicalists called for the mines to be controlled by the miners, the steelworks to be controlled by the steelworkers etc. this division might end in the recreation of the state as arbiter between conflicting interests. As he put it: "In a society which is based on the division of labour, those engaged in vital production (since it forms the basis of production) would have more power over the machinery of co-ordination than those engaged in other lines of production. There would therefore be a real danger of the appearance of classes." (Collected Works: Anarchist Communism, Tokyo 1983)

The anarchist communists in Japan tended to favour a return to the land following a successful revolution, with industrial workers bringing their skills and technology back to their villages. In a predominantly rural society in an historical period where factory workers were generally still connected, through family, to the land, this perspective may have made some sense. Primitivists take note.

Working class self-organisation and permanent economic organisations

Most (but, unfortunately, by no means all) anarcho-syndicalists would agree with the ACF that the existing Trade Unions are not

vehicles for social revolution. Some may also agree that permanent economic organisations (i.e. unions) have a *tendency* to become integrated into the mechanisms of exploitation, through their role as mediators or representatives, and to develop bureaucratic structures and modes of operation. However, they would argue that, because the anarcho-syndicalist union is simultaneously an economic and an 'ideological' organisation it is resistant to co-option and bureaucratisation. The 'conscious' anarchists within the anarcho-syndicalist union are seen as the safeguard against the organisation "selling-out" and the non-hierarchical structure safeguards against a division between the rank and file and its delegates, preventing the development of a strata with separate interests from the rest of the membership. Although this idea of the 'conscious' anarchist minority in the union has been common in the syndicalist movement it has also been rejected by many 'pure' syndicalists.

Degeneration

However, we would argue that *all* unions, regardless of their initial political orientation (and that would include anarcho-communist) have a tendency to become inexorably dragged into a mediating role and to eventually become a break on autonomous class struggle. This integration into capitalism is indeed usually fought tooth and nail by revolutionary militants, often with temporary success. We believe that the historical experience of the workers movement bears this out.

How does this 'degeneration' happen? For one, anarcho-syndicalist unions, like all other unions, have to be able to get 'better deals' for workers in the here and now, otherwise they remain small, essentially political organisations. Whilst the anarcho-syndicalist union remains small and, importantly, unrecognised by the bosses, organising the most militant, class-conscious workers it can engage in 'wildcat' actions. It maintains a 'revolutionary spirit'. During periods of increased class struggle (which its activities may have contributed to) the union grows. If it can successfully lead strikes, occupations etc. to victory it will attract more members. It is faced with the position of having forced the bosses/management to recognise it, to mediate with it. If at this point the anarcho-syndicalist union doesn't negotiate then it loses the confidence of its broader membership and so is forced to either become the recognised union body or back out of the situation. Since workers have to, at some point this side of the revolution, negotiate with their bosses, it is not surprising that anarcho-syndicalists take the former option. Once the period of intense struggle is over the anarcho-syndicalist union is faced with a choice of carrying out all the mundane, routine jobs that any other union has to, or of returning to being a marginal force in the workplace, leaving the way open to the reformist unions. If it chooses the latter it is no longer in fact a union but a (more or less) revolutionary group within the workplace. It can be said that the anarcho-syndicalist union remains *revolutionary* (i.e. a dynamic force in the class struggle) in as much as it *doesn't act like a union*.

This process is graphically exhibited in the development of the Dockworkers Co-ordination in Spain, the Coordinadora, which emerged in the 1970s. Although this organisation was not specifically anarcho-syndicalist (or indeed syndicalist at all), it was based on an anti-buearcratic, anti-party political, class based and highly 'democratic' structure which involved members of the CNT. Born in the struggles in the ports and in the wider Spanish working class , the Coordinadora, organising through mass assemblies, appeared to be an example of a permanent 'union' organisation which would not succumb to bureaucratisation, routinism and class-collaboration. For years the Coordinadora was involved in struggles which maintained its combatitative momentum and won the admiration of libertarian revolutionaries. With the slow wind-down of those struggles the organisation, however, became less and less dynamic and more and more like a traditional Trade Union, despite the heroic efforts of the anti-capitalist militants involved in it. The coordinadora is a perfect example of how bureaucracy is a natural by-product of economic organisations in periods of 'defeat'.

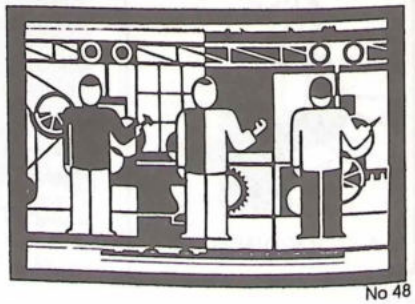
The role of revolutionaries

So, if we reject the idea of building 'alternative', syndicalist union structures, what does the ACF advocate when it comes to workplace organisation? In a sense this question is answered by the experience of the working class in struggle. In times of upheaval, industrial or communal, the working class has developed organisational forms with which to fight for its interests. The most obvious examples of this are the Soviets of the Russian revolution, the Councils of the German and Italian revolutions, the councils of the Hungarian revolution, the action committees in France in 1968, but there are countless others. The co-ordinating committees of French workers during the 1980s and 90s, the COBAS in Italy in the same period, strike committees amongst the Donbas miners in the Ukraine etc. These 'spontaneous' organisations of the working class can also become bureaucratised/degenerate (think of the fate of the Soviets in the 'Soviet' Union!) but, typically, they dissolve when the task they were created for is over.

Spontaneism

Unlike some anarchists and 'councillists', who tend towards 'spontaneism' and the rejection of any organisation, we do see the need for organised intervention, in the workplace and community, by revolutionaries. In Britain, for example, the tactic by anarcho-syndicalists (Solidarity Federation) to set-up networks of militants in various industries is one we would support. Rather than being the foundation for an eventual 'general' union, however, we would see such co-ordinations as a means to building revolutionary workplace groups linking with militants locally and beyond. Such groups would produce propaganda, organise resistance groups, intervene in struggles

Continues on page 13



ANARCHIST ABC BLACK CROSS
Abolish crime. Abolish prison.

Green Anarchist

Following the vicious sentences dished out to 3 editors of Green Anarchist (see last *Organise!*) the London Gandalf Support Campaign (LGSC) was launched with 85 people from a wide range of groups and organisations attending the first meeting. The 3 year jail sentences for reporting news of environmental and animal rights direct actions has resulted in the creation of the Gandalf Supporters Campaign (nationally) and a number of local support groups. Thousands are being asked to sign a Solidarity Pledge to back the continued reporting of direct actions in defiance of the prison sentences.

The appeal by Noel Molland, Saxon Wood and Steve Booth is liable to be heard in July. The trials of another editor of Green Anarchist, Paul Rogers, and the Animal Liberation Front press officer Robin Webb are due to come up. They would like their trials to take place after the appeal, although obviously the sentencing Judge and the State would like this to happen beforehand!

The LGSC are organising a Liberation Tour countrywide to raise awareness about the case. LGSC will hold a major public meeting later in the year with the screening of the Gandalf and McLibel videos.

Both Noel and Saxon have been moved from the Guys Marsh prison as they requested, to prisons nearer relatives.

Write to the GANDALF prisoners at: Steve Booth (CK4323) HMP Lancaster Castle Lancaster LA1 1YL.

Saxon Wood (CK4322)HMP Send, Ripley Road, Woking Surrey GU23 7LJ Noel Molland (CK4321), HMP Channings Wood,Denbury, Newton Abbot, devon TQ12 6DW.

"His only crime was to defend himself"

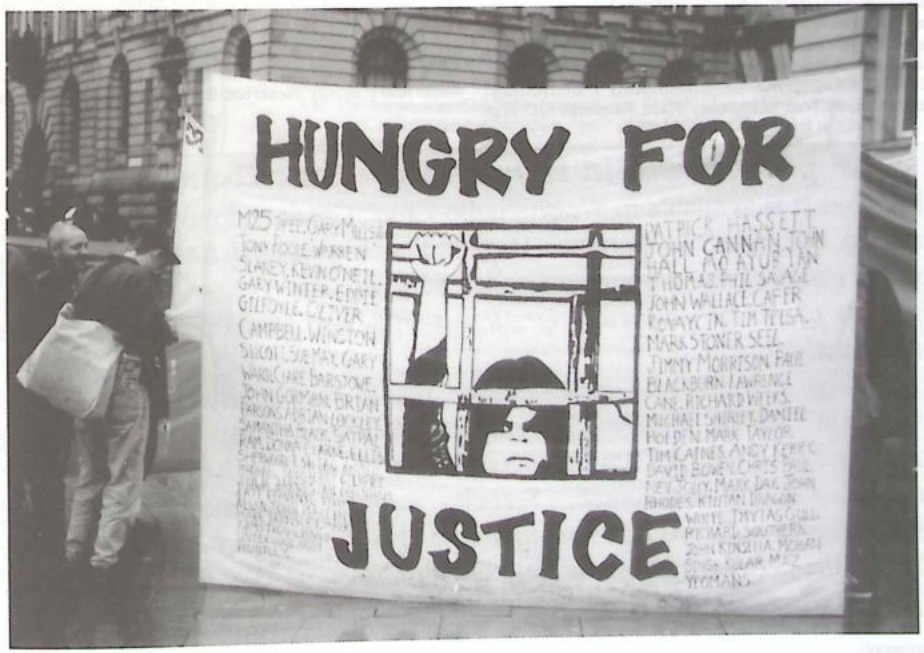
Arthur Lee Williams II was attacked outside his apartment. In the struggle that ensued the attacker was shot. Arthur Williams later found that his attacker was a policeman (not in uniform). This was only the beginning of his experience of injustice and corruption.

His case was heard by an all white jury in Texas. Texas has a long history of racism and prejudice against blacks. Arthur Williams is black. the judge sentencing him was canvassing for police votes at the time of his trial. His lawyer was inexperienced and failed to bring critical evidence to the court's attention.

There is no way that Arthur Williams could have received a fair and unbiased trial with a white jury determining his guilt in a case that involved a policeman from his state, or with a judge who needed police votes.

He is appealing and waiting to be heard. Unfortunately, this does not come cheap in the USA. He needs £150,000 to cover legal expenses. All hope for paying for this lies in donations.

At the moment Arthur Williams is living in terrible conditions. He describes it as "Hell on Earth". Prisoners are only allowed out of their cells for 3 hours a day in the week; they are not allowed out of their cells at the weekend. Every time prisoners need to leave their cells they are stripsearched (often a female guard will be present). Prisoners on Death Row cannot receive packages from the outside world, they must buy everything from the prison commissionary. Those without friends and family have to go without as prisoners cannot earn any money. They often do not get any medical treatment as the doctors do not see any point in keeping them alive. There are no real recreational facilities. Therefore, some prisoners commit suicide and others take it out on their fellow



prisoners by attacking and killing them for little or no reason. Texas has one of the worst prison systems in the USA and has a high murder rate not just from prisoners killing prisoners but from guards killing prisoners.

At the moment donations are needed to cover legal expenses, any donation would help. If you would like to help in other ways contact Arthur Lee Williams II Campaign, c/o IWW, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester LE1 IWB. In USA write to Deborah Williams, 4227 1st Avenue South Minneapolis MN 55409 USA. Any cheques or money orders to the Prisoners Campaign Group to above address.

German anarchist nicked

Hans-Georg Eberl, militant of the I-AFD (Initiative for a German Anarchist Federation) faces a prison sentence because of his antifascist activity. On 2 November 1997 in the Bavarian town of Koeschning, 500 extreme right activists met to create an international of the European Right. They included leaders of Front National France, Vlaams Block from Belgium, as well as German fascists. Before the meeting 140 antifascists demonstrated outside. they were attacked by neo-nazi skinheads, and one had his nose broken. The police protected the retreat of his attacker, after which fighting broke out between the opposing forces. The police chose to steam in against the antifascists, arresting 3. One of them, Hans-Georg, was accused of throwing a stone at a cop. His injuries were such that he needed no medical treatment whatsoever.

Hans-Georg was imprisoned from 2-14 November in preventive detention. He was obliged to work for a mark an hour, his glasses were taken away after a week, only his parents were allowed to visit, his mail was heavily censored. He was freed on bail, charged with "grave wounding" and "serious threat to public order".

Repression against antifascists and anarchists has always been an instrument used by the State. But for several months, the German state has considerably toughened its stance, banning antifascist demos and persecuting militants. In response the I-AFD has demanded that all charges be dropped against Hans-Georg.

Send letters of protest to Herr Beckstein, Bavarian Minister of the Interior at Staatsminister des Innern, Odeonsplatz 3, 80539 Munich, Germany.

Contact I-AFD, Gruppe Verden, Grosse Str. 62, 27283 Verden, Germany. e-mail: i-afd_@anarch.free.de

Satpal Ram

On December 12 last year the parole board rejected Satpal ram's application for parole, consequently Satpal will have to serve another two years before his case comes up for review again. Satpal Ram has now served 11 years for defending himself against a racist attacker (who subsequently died). In those 11 years he has been moved **53** times, an abuse in itself, and has been regularly victimised by various prison regimes. He says "I am often held in total isolation in solidarity confinement, having to endure prolonged periods of deprivation, psychological abuse, intimidation, starvation diets and physical torture". the fight to free Satpal continues. you can write to him at Satpal Ram E94164, HMP the Wolds, Brough, Everthorpe, North Humberside.

Three strikes and you're out! Continued from page 6

Protesters gave out leaflets bearing her photo, detailing how she had consistently harassed claimants and tried to cut their benefits on 8 documented occasions. The leaflets denounced Labour's New Deal as compulsory slave labour and condemned the cuts in single parent's benefits. Police arrived, but were too late to stop the action, there were no arrests. We won't be intimidated by the police and courts. The 3 strikes resistance continues.

AUTONOMOUS CENTRE OF EDINBURGH / EDINBURGH CLAIMANTS, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA Scotland. 0131-557 6242 (ansaphone) anarchy@cableinet.co.uk pager 01426 128984 (v.short message only).

LEGAL NOTE - In court the claimant pled guilty to the charge as above; the prosecution dropped the part of the original charge that he made "abusive, offensive and threatening remarks". He stated that although he had delivered the letter, he was not a member of Edinburgh Claimants nor had he been involved in any other 3 strikes related activity. Please bear this in mind in anything written.

ACF pamphlets in languages other than english

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address..

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If you know anybody who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain, or you have contacts in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia or Macedonia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our *Aims and Principles* are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for bulk orders.

The Union Makes us Strong? Syndicalism: A critical analysis

continued from page 10

and argue for self-organisation at all times. When struggles break out these networks would co-ordinate action and promote the creation of strike and struggle committees outside of union control. When struggles end, these groups maintain an organised presence, bringing together militants in order to build for further struggles. Such groups would be linked, not by a union-type structure but organically with both the revolutionary organisation and the local libertarian movement.1

Conclusion

the Soviet Bloc) increasing numbers of working class militants are looking for alternatives. Syndicalism appears as a 'ready-made' alternative to the Trade

As we stated in part one of 'Syndicalism: A Critical Analysis' (*Organise!* 46), anarcho-syndicalism is in a state of resurgence on a world scale. With the collapse of 'actually existing socialism' (ie state capitalism in Unions and their Social Democratic/Leninist defenders. What our article has wished to do is promote a critical debate on whether the syndicalist (including anarcho-syndicalist) model is the way forward in the struggle. We believe that it is not and that libertarians must give serious thought to the whole question of workplace organisation and beyond. We welcome further discussion in this area.

1. For a detailed outline of the ACF approach to workplace struggle organisation send an A4 SAE to the London address, asking for out 'Strategy and Tactics' document.

Reviews

The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays. Nestor Makhno. Edited by Alexandre Skirda. 114 pages. AK Press. £7.95.

"Organisational responsibility and discipline should not be controversial: they are the travelling companions of the practice of social anarchism".

THIS COLLECTION OF articles was mainly published in *Dielo Trouda*, the excellent anarchist communist review produced in exile in Paris by Makhno, Piotr Arshinov and Ida Mett. Many of the articles address themselves to the problems of the Russian Revolution, and above all, the insurrectionary movement in the Ukraine, the Makhnovschina, inspired by Makhno himself. Others address themselves to the false accusation that Makhno and the movement were anti-Semitic and carried out pogroms against Jews. The Dielo Trouda group correctly analysed the role of the Bolsheviks and the nature of Soviet society. As Makhno remarks: "It has come to pass in History that the workers have defeated Capital, but the victory then slipped from their grasp, because some State power emerged, amalgamating the interests of private capital and those of State capitalism for the sake of success over the toilers".

Also of great value are Makhno's reflections on the Spanish Revolution of 1931. He notes with uncanny foresight that: "The FAI and the CNT (Reviewer's note: The Iberian Anarchist Federation and the mass anarcho-syndicalist union the General Confederation of Labour) ...must not be afraid to assume the reins of the strategic, organisational and theoretical revolutionary leadership of the toilers' movement. Obviously they will have to steer clear here of unity with the political parties generally and with the Bolshevik-communists in particular, for I imagine that their Spanish counterparts will be worthy imitators of their Russian mentors...So they will inevitably betray their allies and the very cause of the revolution". If only the Spanish libertarian movement had heeded these words in 1936! Indeed Makhno has sharp criticisms of the Spanish movement, apt for anarchism internationally and still pertinent today. "...because anarchism possesses no hard and fast program, because the anarchist activities that have been carried out have been, and are still, conducted amidst the most utter dispersion, rather than springing from a tactical unity determined and enlightened by a theoretical unity, by a single shared goal".

This leads on to Makhno's observations on organisation, some of which are included here. In his direct, no-nonsense way, he effectively argues for the need for efficient organisation and saying that: "Anarchism can no longer remain walled up inside the narrow parameters of a marginal thinking to which only a few tiny groups operating in isolation subscribe".

Throughout this collection of articles one is conscious of the intransigent and clear sighted revolutionary spirit of Makhno. It is a pity that this is not adequately served by the book. The original French edition included, in addition to the articles printed in English, Alexander Berkman's account of the Makhnovists, as well as *Memories of a Makhnovist Partisan*, by Ossip Tsebry. Now admittedly, this last text has been issued as a separate pamphlet by the Kate Sharpley Library, but it would have been nice to have had this edition in its entirety, especially given the price! Similarly, the translation work is sometimes sloppy. So we can read that Daniel Guerin was at one time the "Secretariat for History of the French Anarchist Federation". This is nonsensical as the term implies more than one person, and in fact the original reads "on the Secretariat". Similarly we see the following nonsensical reference, saying that: "He (Voline) told him that Arshinov, an intellectual and Makhno a peasant" were a "team" and that they had to remain "inseparable". The original reads: "He told him that he, an intellectual, Arshinov , a worker, and Makhno, a peasant...". Despite these reservations, the book should be read by all libertarians and those searching for alternatives to Leninism.

Offence Issue 1 £1.50
Animal: The Football Special Issue 2 80p

Offence is the fanzine-style magazine of the Libero! Football Supporters Network which appears to be a campaigning group opposing the increasing authoritarianism and 'moral policing' found in professional football. The politics appear libertarian and anti-state, albeit with a nod to 'new laddism'. It contains several quite interesting articles, not least one which plays down the hard-line Loyalist and fascist tendencies which exist amongst Glasgow Rangers fans as "..the superficial appearance of religion and Ireland". Yeah, right.

We say appear because a (not too) closer examination reveals that the glossy and expensive (20 pages) 'zine' is in fact a product of the terminally dodgy Revolutionary Communist Party and the Football Supporters Network is their latest front organisation (like Workers against Racism, Irish Freedom Movement etc.). Why a football front? Well, having given up on the working class as a bunch of losers the RCP focus on middle class intellectuals (such as themselves) as the vanguard of the revolution. Seeing the influx of middle class -types into football it's an area that they obviously feel they can organise. Therefore, despite all the (accurate) criticism of the anti-fan activities of clubs, government and police, you will be hard-pressed to find any mention of *class* in the pages of Offence.

Unlike Animal, for whom class is number one on the agenda. Not surprising as Animal is produced by people involved in Class War and the Movement against the Monarchy. The Animal Football Special is a bit of a mixed bag including an article on recent football protests 'When the Fans Hit the Shits', an interesting piece on the Dublin Riot a couple of years ago by Larry O'Hara and an eulogy to Eric Cantona (!). An anarchist apparently (hmm...). Animal isn't a slick production and obviously isn't following any party line. Since this Football Special is a one -off , it begs the question if there's a need for a regular football fanzine with a working class anarchist perspective? The football fanzine explosion of the past 15 years has seen a number of 'zines with decent politics and attitude, perhaps there's a place for a revolutionary alternative to shite like Four Four Two et al.?

Offence isn't it, but it's worth a look. Just approach with caution. It's available from Libero! 1 Darwin Road, London N22 6NS. Animal Football Special is available from P.O.Box 467, London E8 3QX.

Working Class Times Volume 1 Issue 1

This four sided newsheet draws inspiration from the ideas of Andy Anderson, who used to be in Solidarity many years ago and wrote some good articles at that time. Since then, he's developed a theory of the middle class as the real enemy. As the paper says "The middle class as a whole.... run everything" and "This economic system was created by the middle class for their financial benefit..."

But surely the expression "middle class" means that it is between two other classes- the working class(the mass of the population) and the ruling class. Working Class Times(WCT) confuses the class structure of this society. Those who own the wealth and land, the bosses, royalty, aristocracy, big land lords, big farmers etc. as well as those who politically administer capitalism-the top civil service, the government, the top echelons of the police, military and intelligence, the media barons and controllers, the judiciary etc. are the ruling class. To these could be added those who run the political party structures and the union bureaucrats. It is not the middle class as WCT says that "run the press...run the BBC, and all those who own and run the television companies". They are part of the ruling class.

There deserves to be a debate on the whole question of class, but it won't be found here. WCT reduces everything to a blur. Of course there are people in between the working class and the ruling class, some of whom can be defined as middle class. There are groups of people like technicians, for example, who could be described as strata rather than a class (depending if they have administrative responsibilities).There is the petty bourgeoisie-small shopkeepers, etc. There is the mass of the police force, below the command structures, the prison officers, the lower ranks of the civil service, the mass of the armed forces, those who run the media, journalists and presenters for example. Some of these are highly paid, some are not. Some of these, like cops or soldiers, may have come from the working class. They are no longer working class, because of their position as agents of repression of the mass of the population. To say as WCT do that " All who run the three armed forces, from the Minister of Defence down to the 2nd lieutenants, are middle class" removes the distinctions between say, a General (part of the ruling class) and a second lieutenant (part of the command structure but at a much lower level). Yes, all of these are our enemy, but they are in different class positions. As I said, there deserves to be a debate. What about academics, university teachers, indeed teachers in general? Where precisely are they in a class society? Is a teacher really in the same class position, as say, the Minister of Education?

ACE Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Anarchism -As We See It A new revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary theory and practice. 60p & SAE. 6th printing now available.

Role of the Revolutionary Organisation Anarchist communists reject the Leninist model of a "vanguard" party as counter-revolutionary. What then is the role of a revolutionary organisation? This pamphlet sets out to explain. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text. 60p & SAE.

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Aspects of Anarchism Collected articles from the pages of *Organise!* on the fundamentals of anarchist communism. 30p & SAE.

The Anarchist Movement in Japan The fascinating account of Japanese Anarchism in the 20th century. Japan had an Anarchist-Communist movement that numbered tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells its story. £1 plus SAE

Where there's Brass, there's Muck A stimulating and thought-provoking ACE pamphlet on ecology.£1.80 plus p&p.

Making Progress is out of print at the moment

A One-Man Manifesto and Other Writings for Freedom Press. Herbert Read. 212 pages. Freedom Press. £6.

Writings Against Power and Death. Alex Comfort. 168 pages. Freedom Press. £5.

BOTH THESE BOOKS appeared in 1994, and are anthologies of a couple of intellectuals associated with the anarchist movement in this country from the late thirties until the fifties. Read declared anarchism in 1937 as a result of his observations of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War- quite an effort when you consider that many British intellectuals had rallied to the Soviet lie-machine (an experience that was to be repeated with a passing adulation among some for the 'achievements' of Maoist China). Both he and Comfort were to provide articles and sometimes speak at public meetings, although neither involved themselves in day-to-day practical activity like the production of propaganda. Read saw the future society as anarchist communist, but along with many others of the day, thought that this would be achieved through a syndicalist strategy. "On his return from the United States...he came to see me and talked mostly about supermarkets, which he had seen for the first time, and which interested him because people took what they wanted from the shelves; it seemed to him that, if only the cash desks at the entrances could be removed, the supermarket would be the perfect model for free anarchist communist distribution..." (Recollection of George Woodcock, quote in Read book). Certainly Read's early writings collected here are staunchly revolutionary in particular his *The Method of Revolution*. However by 1947, Read's revolutionism was beginning to wane and he turned increasingly to the quietist, non-violent ideas that were beginning to emerge within the movement, that would sap it (and continue to sap it) for many a year. Take for example his *Anarchism Past and Future*, a lecture delivered to the London anarchists in 1947. "The word revolution should largely disappear from our propaganda, to be replaced by the word education...". He goes on to call for the discarding of the romantic conceptions of anarchism, including insurrection and the arming of the working class. "All that kind of futile agitation has long been obsolete: but it was finally blown into oblivion by the atomic bomb. The power of the State, of our enemy, is now absolute. We cannot struggle against it on the plane of force, on the material plane. Our action must be piecemeal, non-violent, insidious and universally pervasive."

Defeatist

This defeatist 'educationalist' and non-violent approach was to reach its climax in Read's acceptance of a knighthood for his contribution to the arts. Read's feeble excuses for why he accepted this are re-printed in the book. From this moment on he had little to do with the movement. Dying in 1968, he left a legacy of revolutionary writings from the forties, some re-printed here.

Comfort was to gravitate to the anarchist movement as a result of his opposition to all wars, including the Second World War. This anti-militarism or pacifism, was not one weighed down with false ideas of non-violence. Comfort welcomed popular resistance and was to remark upon the Allied slaughter of tens of thousands with its bombings of Dresden and other German towns that: "Not one political leader who has tolerated this filthy thing, or the indiscriminate bombardment of Germany which preceded it, should be permitted to escape the consequence of what he has done".

Beyond Resistance- a Revolutionary Manifesto for the Millennium

A new pamphlet offering the ACF's in-depth analysis of the capitalist world in crisis, suggestions about what the alternative Anarchist Communist society could be like, and evaluation of social and organisational forces which play a part in the revolutionary process.

A refreshing and stimulating new look at what's going on in the world.

Everyone should read this document.

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However, unlike Read's anarchism, at least in the forties, Comfort's was not based on class struggle but on the revolt of the individual. As he himself mistakenly remarked: "The war is not between classes. The war is at root between individuals and barbarian society". Thus, his anti-war articles contained in the book under review, whilst they heartily denounce the World War and the atrocities of both Axis and Allies, always fall back on a call for individuals as individuals to disobey. His other post-war articles gathered here because it is assumed by the compiler that they contain some libertarian interest, range over topics such as the American novel, George Orwell, Whither Israel, etc. provoke a big Why? from this reviewer.

Comfort and Read, like George Woodcock, were intellectuals who rallied to the anarchist movement for several years and then moved off again. Meanwhile others got on with the donkey-work of the incessant propaganda and agitation. Are these books produced because they are the writings of celebrities? Is it not the case that the value of these intellectuals is over-estimated? Was there not a disdain, from Woodcock at least, for working class anarchists? Would it not be the case that a number of liberal ideas were imported by Comfort, Read and Woodcock into the British anarchist movement? I'd finish by saying that Read's book is worth a read, whilst Comfort's is of peripheral interest (dare I assume!) to the reader of *Organise!*

Cornelius Castoriadis 1922-1997

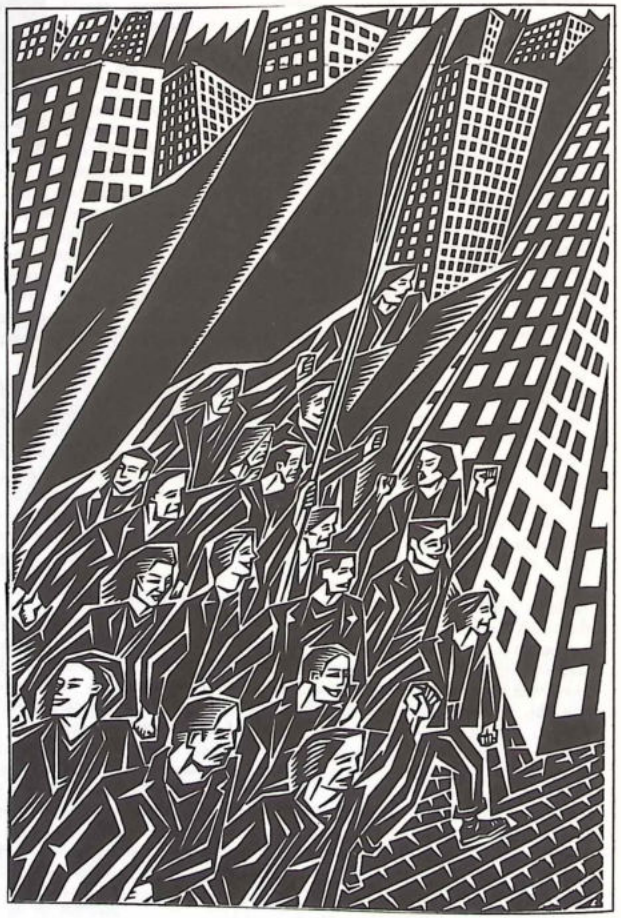
Cornelius Castoriadis was born Kornelios Kastoriades in Istanbul to a Greek family. Growing up in Athens he joined the Young Communists in 1937 and the Communist Party in 1941. During the war he read "several books that had miraculously escaped the auto da fes of the dictatorship: Souvarine, Ciliga, Serge, Barmine". He joined a group on the extreme left of Trotskyism, and was involved in the resistance to the German occupiers. At the end of the war he was physically threatened by both fascists and Stalinists, forcing him to leave for France. Here he joined the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, but broke with it in 1948. Along with Lefort and Lyotard, he helped set up the Socialisme ou Barbarie group,(S ou B) initially made up of ex-Trotskyists and ex-Bordigists, often writing in its paper of the same name under the pen names of Pierre Chaulieu or Paul Cardan. He broke with Leninism, thinking that the revolution could be made only by the workers themselves, not by the party. Workers' councils would be set up in the early stages of the revolution. He did think that some form of revolutionary organisation would be essential, uniting the revolutionary forces, and that once the revolution began, the revolutionary organisation would have to fight inside the organisation of councils to stop possible Leninist take-overs. Similar ideas are expressed in an ACF pamphlet The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation.

In the first issue of S ou B, the group denounced the Trotskyist characterisation of the Soviet Union as a "degenerate workers state". They developed this in No 2 and 4, applying a Marxist critique to the Soviet Union itself, saying that the Party bureaucracy had collectively taken over the means of production and surplus of labour. By 1960 they were saying that the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, defined as the need to reduce workers to simple order-takers opens a crisis which touches every aspect of life. From 1964 , in No 36 up to the last issue of the paper No 4, Castoriadis definitively broke with Marxism.

The S ou B group exerted their influence outside France with Correspondence in the USA, Unita Proletaria in Italy, and the Solidarity group in this country. Indeed, Solidarity published many works of Castoriadis under the name of Cardan, and he influenced many libertarian socialists and anarchists. The influence of the group was apparent also in May 1968 in France, even though the S ou B group had dissolved 2 years before. As D. Blanchard, a former member wrote in Courant Alternatif, paper of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire "...The activity of the group was not limited either to a critique of Stalinism or the publication of a review. On the theoretical level, the analysis of the bureaucratic phenomenon in Eastern Europe found its echo in that of the bureaucratisation of workers organisations- unions, parties- and in the bureaucratisation of the vital organs of capitalism, the State, business corporations. To this study largely contributed... the daily experience of comrades in the workplaces. Finally, very conscientially, we were preoccupied with enlarging the field of political analysis in extending it, as had already been done by the workers movement in its most fertile moments, to the situation of women, of youth, the content of work, education, urbanism, leisure, consumerism, cinema etc.".

In his last period, Castoriadis directed himself towards philosophical investigations, to psychoanalysis. In this period, his lack of knowledge of current social events and movements led him towards a tentative defence of the West - because struggle still remained possible within it- against Stalinist imperialism. After the collapse of the Soviet Union he revised his ideas, returning to a critique of market capitalism and globalisation. However, whilst he was full of sarcasm for the bosses and the madness of the system, there was a distinct streak of superficial sociologism in his writings. When asked whether the work abandoned by S ou B should be taken up again, he replied that, in the absence of a social movement that took on the critique of capitalism in its most modern forms, this was not possible!

The best of Castoriadis' thought lies in his radical libertarian vision which puts at the centre of a critique of capitalism , not economic laws or a fatal contradiction leading to its collapse, but the action of people attempting to take back their lives at every level.



letters

Dear *Organise!*

If your periodic 'analysis' of syndicalism is not a defining characteristic, then what other purpose does it serve? You know perfectly well that anarcho-syndicalists are as opposed to mere trade unionism as is the even tinier anarcho-communist element yet any casual reader would be hard-pressed to discover this from the pages of your comment paper *Organise!*. A little defining 'sectarianism' probably does no-one harm, however, and we've grown use to these 'attacks' over the years.

You rightly point to the counter-revolutionary activities of anarcho-syndicalists during the Mexican Revolution. this may have been due to a lack of information as to the reality of the situation in the south, it does not lessen the naiveté of the anarcho-syndicalists who participated but neither does it follow that modern anarcho-syndicalists would take a similar decision.

"Many of the earliest critics of Moscow were not syndicalist however but Marxists..." (*Organise!* 46). How early is early? Golos Truda, an anarcho-syndicalist paper, was warning of the dangers in issues No 13, 15, 3rd & 6th November 1917. Anarcho-syndicalist criticism of Bolshevik machinations continued throughout the revolution as a little more reading would show. It is also disingenuous to imply that anarcho-communists were more or less immune to the pseudo-libertarian slogans of the Leninists statists.

I've no idea where Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin got the idea that anarcho-syndicalists believe, "...that somehow the unions are progressive, and what's more the unions are some kind of force that can not be revolutionised" (*Organise!* 46). Unless, of course, he was talking of syndicalism, which, as we know, does not have a libertarian revolutionary perspective. I think anarcho-syndicalists and the ACF would agree that industrial *workers* can be 'revolutionised' and that this grass-roots break with trade union reformism is an essential prerequisite to the libertarian confrontation with capitalism. Workers' Councils or Workers' Assemblies? Not much difference really, but anarcho-syndicalists recognise the need for these to co-ordinate in order to make them effective - it is this horizontal co-ordination that names the worker's union.

Readers could be forgiven for thinking that Malatesta never made a mistake as he is obviously the last refuge of simple insurrectionism, not that he was very successful in that. However, he did suggest anarcho-syndicalism as a cohesive force for the diverse anarchist groups at a conference in Amsterdam 1907 (Brenan, p172) so his antagonism couldn't have been that strong. The ACF is unwilling (for reasons of definition and survival) to recognise that we are working for the same goal by slightly different (anarchist) methods. If it cannot find anything more relevant with which to fill its pages than attacks on fellow-militants then it's time it gave up the ghost and accept its 'lack of success' with good grace. Not much chance I fear, so when is the 'analysis' for 1998 scheduled?

TS (Somerset Solidarity Federation)

Reply: Thanks for your letter. It's good to know that revolutionaries are thinking critically and you have obviously been thinking critically of us comrade!

We're sorry to hear that anarcho-syndicalists have grown used to "attacks" over the years, but we can assure both you and our other readers that *Organise!* has not been "filling its pages" with "attacks on fellow militants" and our Syndicalism: A Critical Analysis is intended as a contribution to a much needed discussion, not an exercise in sectarianism.

Note, comrade, that we said that *many* of the earliest critics of Moscow were not syndicalists. This does not deny the validity of the criticisms made by the anarcho-syndicalist Golos Truda any more than it denies the criticism made by the anarchist Nabat group. Indeed, the Golos Truda comrades were in advance of many anarchists of the time when they said that the trade unions were dead organisations and the Factory Committees were the form the struggles of the revolutionary proletariat would take in the future.

Anarcho- communists "immune" from the siren call of Bolshevism? Far from it! Countless anarcho-communists were attracted to Bolshevism. This was, partially, a failing of traditional anarcho-communist thinking and organisation, but the attraction of an ostensibly successful revolution was a bigger factor.

The ACF is of the opinion that anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists are working towards the same goal- a classless, stateless, marketless world (communism), and as such we embrace them as comrades in struggle, but we disagree with the method chosen i.e. the syndicalist (unionist) method, which we believe to be fundamentally flawed (see our article in this *Organise!* for details). Our "lack of success", I think you will find, is shared by revolutionaries everywhere. We hope they (or you) will not "give up the ghost"- you can rest assured that we won't. The 1998 analysis? It starts right here comrade...

Dear *Organise!*

On a technical note on the article in the last Organise! on the European Anarchist movement. I believed Solidaridad Obera are actually Madrid based and a split from the CGT, this is unless the group that you are referring to is a more recent Catalan split from the CNT ructions there of the last couple of years.

AF (Dublin)

Reply: Yes, we appear to have mixed up the 2 groups. We meant the Madrid organisation. Whilst we're on the subject, we left out Ireland in the survey on European anarchism (as well as England, Scotland and Wales). For this omission, due undoubtedly to an institutionalised colonialist attitude, the editorial board intends to scourge themselves mercilessly and roll around on a bed of nettles.

Dear *Organise!*

I have only just seen your Spring issue (*Organise!*45) with the article on 3 Strikes which largely focuses on attacking an article by me in Socialist Outlook.

You write that my article was 'remarkably ill-informed' and give 2 examples. First of all, you rubbish my suggestion that Groundswell had changed its position on 3 Strikes. However, Subversion no.20 contains a detailed account of the debate within Groundswell and states " Unfortunately, the following Groundswell conference abandoned 3 strikes as a collective policy because of the arguments of Brighton" and that "the policy has no nationwide face". Secondly, you dispute my claim that some anarchists and syndicalists were opposed to 3 Strikes. well, that has been my experience with syndicalists in my area and they were the source of the statement which is simply a fact, unpalatable as it may be to *Organise!*

Now to look at some of the political arguments. Are anti-JSA and anti-Project Work campaigns strengthened or weakened by adopting 3 Strikes? My original article was written from the experience of the anti-workfare campaign in the Hull area. We built a campaign against Project Work which included CPSA members from both the job centres and the DSS offices. We couldn't have done that if 3 Strikes had been our policy. Unemployed activists viewed the CPSA activists as allies rather than part of the problem.

Is it 'ludicrous' to put pressure on Labour and the Trade Union leaders?

Well, we forced the Hull City Council to boycott Project Work thereby dramatically reducing the number of placements available. That seems worthwhile activity to me and similar actions have been taken in

other areas faced with Project Work. Similarly we fought inside our unions for all the unions to oppose Project Work. Again we were successful. Overall, we tried, and to an extent, succeeded in building an alliance of the unemployed, the trades council, local trade unionists including CPSA and PTC, the council and voluntary sector against Workfare. Obviously, we have no illusion in Labour's policies on the JSA and Workfare. However, the battle to win over those influenced by the Labour Party is important. In the same way, we have tried to win over CPSA members through work by socialists in that union. Ultimately the aim is a mass movement that unites the unemployed and the employed, job centre workers and claimants and a wide range of left activists. To talk of those socialists who oppose 3 Strikes as having a class divide between them and the unemployed is sectarian nonsense which does nothing to help build campaigns against the JSA or Workfare.

KS (Hull)

Reply: Your bold statement that 'ultimately the aim is a mass movement that unites the unemployed, job centre workers and claimants and a wide range of left activists' shows that your perception of what is happening inside the welfare state system is very different to our own and to that of many claimants. If there were the slightest chance of job centre workers taking effective workplace action motivated by support for the unemployed the ACF would be encouraging joint action as a major tactic. In practice, job centre workers, the CPSA and trade unionists generally object to welfare legislation when I. their own safety/working conditions are threatened and II. when there are political points to be scored against their political enemy. The fear exhibited by trade unionists and groups like your own about claimants acting autonomously results from an outdated and entrenched view of current class structures. The Left talks of the unemployed as a lesser class of 'worker' with no economic clout and therefore answerable in struggle to 'real' workers like those in unions.

You fail to see that Job Centre Staff have been set up by the last government and New Labour to protect the State from the unemployed who it is in the process of abandoning and demonising. The rightwing CPSA inparticular has stood by and let this happen. Job Centre staff no longer facilitate access to the welfare state for the poor, they police the welfare state with the threat of class violence: intimidation, criminalisation and poverty. The power given to them, that of both initiating or managing the process whereby claimants can become destitute and homeless as the result of sanctions imposed, increasingly even by 'front desk' staff, places them in a very different position from the vast majority of similar ranking civil servants, whose managers are usually the only ones with the power to, for example, cut off housing benefit, throw an immigrant out of the country, take a child into care and so on. Some do their job resentfully and reluctantly and do what little they can to help claimants, and they are most unlikely, by definition, to be the targets of '3 Strikes'. Some take out the frustration of their miserable job on the unemployed, and 3 Strikes is a very benign and non-violent response to this in comparison to some acts of retaliation by more isolated and frustrated claimants (this in itself raises more interesting and pertinent questions e.g. does 3 Strikes in fact dilute class anger?)

So the Labour Council in Hull boycotted Project Work! They did the same in Nottingham, as did the Council for Voluntary Services, for which the local anti-JSA group, which implements 3 Strikes, can take some credit. In practice these boycotts were just a protest at Tory legislation. What is 'ludicrous' is the idea that such posturing would sabotage PW. Pilots in Hull and Nottingham were, in terms of the legislation, successful; claimants were simply placed on non-council placements, often actually in the voluntary sector which the CVS was in practice powerless to prevent. Furthermore, in Nottingham, some of these organisations actually receive council funding! And where are the boycotts of Labour's New Deal? Local councils will be the main implementers of the 'Environmental Task Forces' and voluntary sector leaders are already actively collaborating. How does any of this help us deal with the frustration of daily life on the JSA, Incapacity, or whatever benefit we manage to prise out of the State?

As to whether 3 Strikes is effective for anti-JSA/Project Work campaigns; it isn't primarily a 'campaign' weapon, it's to help survival on the dole. Effective in that sense it is, because more than one 'troublesome' claimant has found front desk workers to be suddenly more cooperative, and at least 2 of the nastiest Job Centre Managers targeted have taken lengthy leaves of absence. If claimants want to spend the time and emotional energy they were expending coping with the dole on campaigning work, great!

Highlighting differences in a unified approach amongst anarchists is a red herring. Some, including us, support it, some haven't decided, and evidently some don't agree with it (we don't know any of the latter except those you refer to having spoken to, and their comments would be most welcome). So what! Such an innovative tactic as 3 Strikes is bound to create waves and the debate around it is important and inevitable. We are, after all, questioning the class interest of a group of workers and recognising that the class make-up of society has changed and made redundant the idea that all workers have common class identity. But we should point out that at least one activist dole office worker and CPSA member we know of thinks there is nothing wrong with 3 Strikes in principle, but that claimants groups should let left-wing CPSA members tell them who are the real bastards in the dole offices that deserve to be targeted! Hmmmm! we don't have a problem with trade unionists having different views on a new working class weapon - it's an important debate. But we do have a problem with you telling claimants what they can and can't do in their own defence.

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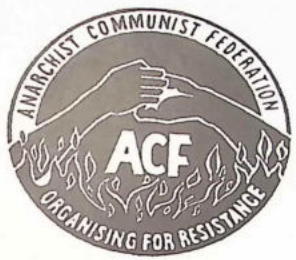

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Haile Selassie

EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I of Ethiopia has almost universally been remembered as a kindly benefactor, yet the evidence suggesting otherwise is overwhelming. It is argued that he implemented many reforms in his country and Rastafarians believe him to be God incarnate (as prophesied by Marcus Garvey, who surely deserves his own Myths and Legends page?) but how justified are these suggestions?

If we take as starting point Fascist Italy's invasion of Ethiopia we find Selassie fleeing to Britain in a brave attempt to rally support for his country. He remained in Bath for the duration of the war, but on returning to take his place on the throne he became paranoid about the partisans who had stayed and fought the Italians, fearing their bravery and preferring obsequiousness. Thus, they were gradually removed from positions of authority and replaced with those who had collaborated with the Italians as he knew they could be easily kept in line and would be open to the methods Selassie used to control his dignitaries. Selassie's methods of asserting and achieving and maintaining power involved breeding an atmosphere of distrust and corruption, where government officials would inform on each other in a constant vying for power, each wanting to be noticed and promoted by the Emperor, as the financial rewards could be great.

Ethiopia had much in common with any other capitalist society. For instance, starving peasants felt themselves privileged to even *see* a rich person in the flesh (shades of the homeless in Britain grieving over a recently deceased Princess). To achieve this state of affairs, Selassie would throw crumbs to the poor and bribe the rich. An example of this was his practice of throwing coppers to the poor to celebrate his birthday each year.

Always Selassie had to exercise absolute control, punishing those who undermined his authority, two examples being Prince Imru and Tekele Wolda Hawariat. Prince Imru gave some of his lands to the peasantry without the Emperors permission and as a result he was exiled form Ethiopia for twenty years for "disloyalty". Tekele Hawariat, a celebrated war hero, refused bribes and special privileges and so was imprisoned and finally executed by decapitation. If Selassie couldn't have someone in the palm of his hand then he would get rid of them.

Progressive

The image Selassie liked to project to the West was always one of being somehow progressive. To this end many youngsters were sent abroad to be educated, though when they returned Selassie's megalomania and greed meant that this education could never be employed to initiate any reforms in the country. Yet, as we have said, Selassie

is remembered by many as a great *reformer*. Rather than being interested in reform, Selassie was interested in 'development'. This allowed him to appeal for funds to help this process. To this end hospitals, bridges, factories etc. were built, all bearing the name of the emperor. But as the money poured into Ethiopia much of it was misappropriated by Selassie and hundreds of millions of dollars found their way into his personal bank accounts. The West, however, continued to back Selassie, who they regarded as a bulwark against 'communism' in Africa.

In the sixties, when Selassie had begun to lose his grip following an attempted coup d'etat, he found it necessary to pay Army officers and his Police obscene amounts of money to maintain loyalty and order. Thus, in a country of 30 million farmers and 100,000 police and military personnel, 1% of the state budget was allocated to the farmers and 40% to the army and the cops.

Sumptous Banquets

Selassie bred corruption in Ethiopia, he maintained a backward and inhuman system in which millions of his subject lived In degrading poverty, oppressive misery and ignorance. Nowhere in the world was the gulf between rich and poor greater. In 1973 Jonathan Dimbleby visited northern Ethiopia and made the film which was to signal the end for Selassie. The film for the first time showed that people were starving to death in their multitudes, despite the money for 'development' which was being pumped into the country. At the Palace the splendour and riches seemed to know no bounds. The juxtapositioning of the two contrasting images in the film was striking; the pigs with their sumptuous banquets were growing fatter on the backs of walking skeletons. Of course this hunger suited Selassie as people could hardly rebel when they were starving to death. There was in fact, however, plenty of grain in Ethiopia. But landowners took the harvest from the peasants, grain prices doubled and the farmers who grew the grain could not afford to buy it.

As the dying continued, western journalists were no longer allowed into Northern Ethiopia. Selassie preferred to show off his great 'developments' to the world press. The suffering could not be hidden indefinitely so, as the situation became a bigger and bigger embarrassment to the Emperor, the Police began to kill off the starving en masse.

It is ironic that Selassie liked to project an image of himself to the world of a kind, tolerant and benevolent soul, yet those in his country who detracted from this image were usually executed. Supporters of Selassie could argue that it was his underlings and not he that were responsible for the atrocities and corruption, the Emperor being kept in total ignorance of the situation. A look at the facts shows this to be impossible. Selassie knew what he was doing when he stuffed the money stolen from his subjects under his mattress and encouraged others in his employ to do likewise. Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski wrote of Selassie: "the Emperor himself amassed his great riches. The older he grew, the greater became his greed, his pitiable cupidity...he and his people took millions from the state treasurer and left cemeteries full of people who had died of hunger, cemeteries visible from the windows of the royal palace" (The Emperor (1984) Picador p.160).

Haile Selassie was not God or a great reformer, but a callous, greedy, thieving autocrat, who should be remembered for the murdering leach that he was.

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Kicked in the Balkans Again

AS THIS ARTICLE is being written we are close to three weeks of NATO bombardment all over Yugoslavia in the name of humanitarian intervention and the "ethical foreign policy" of the British government. Since then, the Serbian leadership under Slobodan Milosevic has continued its military operations in Kosovo driving out hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians across the borders of Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. People are leaving the war zone towards Serbia too. A few of these displaced people are ending up as refugees in NATO countries but the great majority are still suffering in camps in the countries they have fled to. The ones grudgingly accepted by NATO are being kept in prison-like conditions out of touch with family and friends elsewhere. NATO command is insisting on its mission to "attack, pull apart, systematically and progressively degrade Yugoslavia [until] President Milosevic meets and honours international community demands".

Demonstration against the Balkans War outside Aviano base, Italy, 11th April

Propaganda

In Britain, we have been subjected to a barrage of propaganda, vilifying Milosevic as a new genocidal Hitler, and claiming moral justification of whatever action NATO sees fit. We are hearing warnings of world war from the Russian government, and the American CIA's calling for arming of the Kosovan Liberation Army (KLA or UCK). We have heard the call for ground troops, and about the illegality of NATO action under international law and its side-stepping of the United Nations. Aid of a few million pounds is being collected in Britain while £100's of millions are being spent on the NATO war effort, not to mention billions already spent on high-tech weapons and planes.

Balance

The government in Serbia (part of the remaining Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) is engaged in a nationalist adventure in Kosovo, one of the poorest regions of the FRY. The area has seen great changes over the centuries, but especially this century, where the relative size of Serbian and Albanian influence has swung back and forth before, during and after the two world wars, dependant on external forces. Milosevic rose to his present position of power partly due to a promise to end the partial autonomy of Kosovo, which he did in 1989. The Kosovar Albanians, a 90% majority in the province, have since experienced a systematic repression. As a result, the region has been as precariously balanced as Bosnia, and there has been an upsurge in nationalist movements, though until now this has not resulted in major warfare.

Albania

Leading up to the present conflict, the West opposed Milosevic's plans but at the same time had neither encouraged the nationalist movements (branding the KLA terrorist), nor supported an independent Kosovo. People in neighbouring Albania have for the last few years been suffering from the aftermath of a government corruption catastrophe caused by their Democratic Party and Mafia. At the same time NATO was using the area as a base for operations since the first break up of Yugoslavia. Many workers lost everything in the financial collapse caused by investment practices allowed by the new free market, which had been propped up by aid from the European Union, resulting in countrywide insurrection. Elsewhere in the region, in Macedonia which also borders Albania, Kosovo and Greece, tensions continue due to claims on its northern territory by Bulgaria. Hungary, to the North of Serbia, has recently become a NATO member. These factors may have great repercussions which NATO will surely have anticipated in its bid to control the long-term prospects of an unstable region.

Air-strikes

As Milosevic stepped up the military action in Kosovo, both the UN and NATO warned of possible military action. In the end NATO has decided to go it alone and launched air-strikes on the whole of Yugoslavia starting on March 24th, straight after 1400 monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were withdrawn. Milosevic declared a state of war. People are now dying daily from NATO bombs, Serbian and KLA forces in Kosovo, and in the squalid refugee camps.

Nationalism

What can anarchists say about what is happening, and more importantly, what can we do? First of all we have to oppose the war-mongering of all sides, whether

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NATO, Serbia, or the KLA, and to do this we also need to distinguish and understand the types of nationalism involved.

Milosevic's nationalism is/was one of a desire for a Greater Serbia, where Kosovo and preferably Montenegro are firmly under his control. But Serbia can in no way be compared to Germany in the second World War, nor Milosevic as a new Hitler. Germany was the second most powerful country in the world at the time, whereas Serbia is economically quite poor, especially compared to other European countries. Neither can the fascism under Hitler be usefully compared with the Milosevic regime, even if the government itself is not uniform and some like vice-president Seselj might politically be fascist. A swing to the right could well be the result of NATO's attacks, but the ludicrousness of the 'fascist' analogy is shown by the CIA's condemning of Serbia's intended court martial of captured US soldiers as "a Stalinist show-trial". Serbia both fought the Nazis and to some extent resisted Stalinism, but what better for NATO to make out Milosevic as a Hitler and a Stalin all rolled into one. Not only that but genocide - in Hitler's case a systematic attempt to eradicate the Jews from the face of the earth - was part of the Nazi's explicit plan. To use this word for any and all mass deaths in war, even the atrocities of Bosnia or Rwanda, irrespective of the motivation of the perpetrators, is to belittle the holocaust and its death camps. Equating Serbs with pre-W.W.II Germans is an attempt to make ordinary people into legitimate targets for 'democratic' NATO. All of the terms fascist, genocide or even ethnic cleaning (which is used interchangeably with genocide by the likes of Robin Cook) are just propaganda words being used to over-simplify the situation and characterise NATO's enemy as 'evil' so we don't have to question why 'we' are in this war.

Chewing gum

On the other hand, is NATO being imperialist; another kind of nationalism? We are hearing this term used by the left and some anarchists but this is probably not very useful either. Imperialism implies a desire for state power in the region, when this situation is really more about imposition of economic dependency. In so much as the USA dominates NATO and the UN, in addition to a military show of force that can boast to be able to wage war in Iraq and Yugoslavia simultaneously ("We can walk and chew gum" in the words of a NATO spokesman), we are really seeing just another extension of capitalist globalisation, something which has come to supersede the imperialist and colonialist aspirations of individual Western states in the latter part of this century. Already the International Monetary Fund is able to hold Russia to ransom enough for it be careful about how far it's government will go against NATO, and it seems likely that the IMF and World Bank will have a similar role to play in the Balkans when the military intervention has subsided. Other anarchists have already made the connection to the USA/EU trade wars (e.g. over bananas, presided over by the World Trade Organisation), and it seems clear that the US and Germany will soon be fighting with each other over the terms of IMF involvement when the war is over. On the other hand, the US must also be hoping that its dominance in NATO will help it put the EU in line with its economic policy.

Nationalists

What about the nationalist movements in Kosovo then? As usual, the left in Britain is divided over this one. Some in the Labour Party left are anti-NATO and want a UN solution that restabilises Yugoslavia and do not want an independent Kosova. Some like the Socialist Party do support independence, though like their position towards the Six Counties they insist this must be a self-determined "socialist Kosova as part of a socialist confederation of Balkan states". Living Marxism are more pro-Serbia whilst some of the smaller sects like the Alliance for Workers Liberty are pro-national liberation even as far as calling for arming of the KLA (just like the CIA mentioned above!). The Socialist Workers Party are much more firmly anti-NATO whilst stating that the "KLA has fallen into the trap of calling for Western intervention" and criticises their "attacks on Serb civilians in Kosovo alongside Serbian forces". However they fall short of completely opposing Albanian nationalism. An internationalist approach must oppose all sides, call for the desertion of all troops against the war, and for the revolutionary overthrow of the Milosevic regime.

Hypocrisy

If it is necessary to make comparisons with other conflicts, it is to show up the hypocrisy of NATO. Apart from its history in Ireland, both North and South, Britain has its other well known example of supporting the Indonesian government against East Timor. The US together with many of the other NATO members has a long history of supporting either government against oppressed minorities (e.g. Israel against Palestinians, Turkey against Kurds) or rebels against government particularly in the interests of anti-communism (e.g. Mojahedin in Afghanistan, UNITA in Angola). The US has no end of interventions in Central and South America, Asia and Africa, always for their own interests, often anti-Communist, often for stated "humanitarian" reasons. Also we don't see NATO picking a fight with China over Tibet or Russia in Chechnya, other superpowers with equally nasty policies. Many of these conflicts continue to this day. We can be under no illusion that the present war is any different, and that the refugees mean nothing to NATO unless their plight is to prop up their illusion of humanitarian intervention against Milosevic.

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"When the smoke from the bombs clears away, the social differences will be even bigger, the poverty even worse, the authorities even more harsh. And the matter of Kosovo WON'T be solved!", from an e-mail message by Mirko, human rights and peace activist, Pancevo, Zrenjanin (Vojvodina), FRY.

Just war?

We can point out that British aid organisations are raising just a drop in the ocean with their 'jumble sales' for Kosovo victims, when this could be paid for so many times over by the amount of military spending e.g. cruise missiles at a $1m each. Also their stance doesn't necessarily entail opposing the bombings, and leaders of the Christian ideals underpinning so many charities are happy to call the NATO action a "just war".

Action not words

There's a lot we can say, but what can we do? We must have an anti-war position in this conflict, anti-bombing, anti-ground troops (whether NATO or UN). Getting drawn into accepting any sort of statist military solution is to fuel the nationalism and the conflict, which is killing people on sides. We must recognise the difficulty of our comrades in Yugoslavia, as it will become more and more difficult and dangerous for them to oppose their government's war and oppose mass mobilisation (a real possibility if NATO sends in ground troops). The danger is to fall into the trap of seeing "the Serbs" as one entity when there are a whole range of opposition forces, from our anarchist comrades, to 'ethnic minorities' in Serbia itself, to 'pro-democracy' Western-looking middle classes, many of who opposed Milosevic over Bosnia (e.g. in the Zajedno alliance which organised mass demonstrations) and who now feel betrayed by the NATO bombing. We can exchange news and solidarity greetings such as is already happening between anarchists using electronic mail, and circulate this both to show there are people in Serbia that oppose the government and to find out the extent of the bombing which we are not seeing here. Just as we are not told about the million plus people that are dying in Iraq because of sanctions, we will need to know the effect of NATO's destruction of fuel and water supplies, since the government in Serbia will no doubt prioritise its military over the civilian population. We also need to tell them what they are not being told by their media about Kosovo and the border refugee camps, which is being tightly controlled (Serbian TV depicts the NATO logo as stealth bombers in the shape of a swastika!).

As one anarchist message from Belgrade said, "you are probably more informed about what is going on". We can also support comrades elsewhere in the region like the Zagreb Anarchist Movement in Croatia, who have relaunched their Zaginflatch newsletter and put it out on the internet in opposition of the bombing of Serbia. We must expose the hypocrisy of the British government's treatment of refugees (destined for open prisons if they come here), and its attitude to asylum-seekers in general. Perhaps a more difficult task is to be able to support anti-war activities in Kosovo itself against both Serbian and Kosovan Liberation Armies. If we cannot give direct help, we must show in Britain that we are against NATO, whilst at the same time not being confused with being pro-Serbian nationalists. This means organising and attending demonstrations with a clear "NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR" stance. Other protests in Europe have been much larger and have happened much sooner than those in Britain, as the US, Britain and France are the strongest supporters of the NATO warmongering. Big public demonstrations are needed in the interests of internationalism and to try and reverse the propaganda war by our governments. This must happen quickly because it will become all the more difficult to counter a rising patriotism, if/when British troops start dying in any numbers.

For further anarchist news and views on the war, including Zaginflatch newsletter and articles on the US EU trade war connections such as "NATO goes bananas in the Balkans", visit the A-Infos on-line Anarchist News Service (and archive) website http: www.ainfos.ca

All the photos used in this article are taken from the following website: http: www.sherwood.it aviano fotoaviano.htm

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One year on since the Good Friday agreement -

The Peace of the Cemetery

AS 'PEACE PROCESSES' go, the one in progress in the North of Ireland has been a pretty violent one. From the sectarian slaughter before and after the death of Loyalist Volunteer Force boss Billy Wright in December 1997 to the murder of human rights lawyer Rosemary Nelson in March this year, via the Omagh bombing last August, it's been a vicious period since the main paramilitaries called their 'cease-fires'.

Little spoken of in the Brit media, the continuing harassment of Nationalists by the RUC/Army, the sectarian attacks upon isolated (and not so isolated) Catholic families by Loyalist gangs and the on-going siege of the residents of the Garvaghy Road points to a situation of constant, unspectacular but demoralising violence. This uninterrupted, day to day brutalisation is only broken by more 'news-worthy' acts of violence, such as a murder by the Red Hand Defenders or a grenade attack by the Orange Volunteers.

The on-going 'punishment beatings' by both the IRA and the Loyalists, used by Unionist politicians as a stick with which to beat Sinn Fein and to delay things, are another insidious form of violence which both groups of 'defenders of the community' cannot function without. The working class, Protestant and Catholic are stuck between 'anti-socia'l elements and would-be police forces, both drawn from their own communities but both equally uncontrolled by them.

The overall situation is one of a violent, sectarian stagnation. One year has passed since the Good Friday Agreement. The March 10th deadline for the setting up of the Assembly Executive has come and gone. Sinn Fein accuses David Trimble and his Ulster Unionists of "obstructionism" and of using the Unionist Veto. In an assembly which not merely reflects but strengthens the sectarian divide, this is hardly surprising. The question is, how long can this go on? As ever, the 'electorate' watches the show drag on with an increasing sense of deja vu.

If the whole 'Peace Process' is an example of bourgeois Realpolitik, of inter-imperialist politics (British and American) painted upon a local canvas then perhaps we should be looking at the 'alternatives' which may exist. If we look at the political critics of the Good Friday Agreement then they can be divided into the Unionist, the Republican and the Left.

What has happened to them since, and what sort of forces do they represent?

The Unionists

The anti-Agreement Unionists represent the 'No' alternative, otherwise known as the "No alternative at all" alternative. In the run-up to the vote, the 'No' alternative went under the label 'United Unionists'. This pact consisted of Ian Paisley's *Democratic Unionists* and Robert McCartney's *UK Unionists*. As we have argued before (*Organise!* 47: If You Want Peace, Prepare For...'), these dinosaur elements have become less important since the election of the Labour government in 1997. Their rejection of the Good Friday document and their refusal to give support to David Trimble hasn't actually harmed the 'peace process' at all. Rather, their intransigence has served to make the Ulster Unionists appear the party of peace, progress and moderation. As headbanging religious fundamentalists, their politics were and are echoed paramilitarily by the *Loyalist Volunteer Force*, who, alongside the Orange Order, were the other 'hard-line' voice opposing the Agreement. The DUP will continue to be a depository for good old fashioned anti-Catholic hatred but its political constituency is unable to grow. The Loyalist Volunteer Force remains on 'cease-fire', even attempting to gain some sort of credibility by being the first paramilitary group to decommission (a few rusty weapons, probably 'decommissioned' by the group themselves when they were still part of the UVF!). The *Red Hand Defenders* and the *Orange Volunteers*, the two Loyalist groups who have emerged since the LVF called its cease-fire are, effectively, the LVF and sympathetic elements in the *Ulster Freedom Fighters*. Like the DUP, the rump of Loyalist Paramiltarism will continue to function, not least because of the collusion of elements within the British state itself. Politically, this bloc stands for a return to the golden days of a submissive Catholic community in a Protestant state. Those days are long, long over.

The Republicans

The major elements in the Republican Movement who have opposed the Agreement have been *Republican Sinn Fein* and the *Irish Republican Socialist Party*. Within *mainstream* republicanism, The *32-County Sovereignty Movement* had, until very recently, been in the 'No' camp. The attempts by the Irish state to criminalise this tendency following the Omagh bombing has led to their expressing support for the IRA cease-fire and the 'Peace Process' despite continued disagreements with the Sinn Fein leadership over the issue of sovereignty.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party rejected the Agreement but supported the Irish National Liberation Army's decision to join the 'cease-fire'. The IRSP appears to be going through a period of reassessment and re-orientation at the moment and recently re-launched its' newspaper *The Starry Plough*. Since it's formation in 1974 The IRSP have been through various political crisis and, sometimes violent, changes of leadership. The direction of the organisation seems to be towards an involvement in community-based struggles as a distinct Republican Socialist tendency within the broader Republican movement. Although the IRSP derides the Provos for having "accepted the capitalist system" and of having a different (presumably bourgeois) class analysis to themselves, they continue to call for "maximum Republican unity". What can this mean other than unity with the mainstream Republican movement i.e. Sinn Fein? The eventual destination for the IRSP is likely to be a re-affirmation of Leninism, although with the general crisis of the Left in Europe, who knows? Whatever path the IRSP take, their past as little more than an ancillary of the feud-ridden INLA, will weigh upon them like a nightmare. As before, their politics will not offer an independent working class alternative.

Part of the broader "Republican unity" the IRSP would like to see is Republican Sinn Fein (RSF). RSF, however, have little fondness for the IRSP and approaches by the latter to build a united "No" campaign during the Agreement referendum were rejected by the former. Despite their talk of a 'Federal Democratic Socialist Republic', RSF are a traditionalist Republican organisation to the right of the Provisionals but sorely lacking Adams and Co 's political acumen or flexibility. Their politics reflect their origins as an asbstentionist split from Sinn Fein in 1986 and for Republicans they constitute either an anachronism or the last defenders of true Irish Republicanism, depending upon the individual Republican's perspective on the Peace Progress. What is important about RSF is their relationship with the *Continuity IRA*, the only Republican armed group not on cease-fire. Both RSF and CIRA deny any official relationship, but without doubt there is a unity in terms of perspective. Individuals in or around RSF have been subject to serious harassment from police both sides of the border and also from supporters of the 'peace process'. Despite growth since the second IRA cease-fire, Republican Sinn Fein, without any alternative but a return to the armed struggle, are likely to remain marginalised.

The Left

Most of the left in the Six Counties called for a 'Yes' vote in the referendum. The *Workers Party* (WP), what's left of it, supported and continues to support the Agreement. Wracked by splits and violent feuding the Stalinoid/Unionist WP has had little input into the 'peace process' as it continues on its irreversible decline. The *Socialist Party* (the party formerly known as Militant) critically supported the Agreement and stood in the elections to the Assembly, arguing that a 'Yes' vote would allow a period in which class politics (or rather their own Trotskyist version of 'class politics') could develop.

The most notable Left opposition to the Agreement came from the *Socialist Workers Party* (SWP). The SWP called for a 'No' vote on the grounds that the Assembly would "institutionalise sectarianism" (Socialist Worker, May 1st 1998). The SWP in the North of Ireland is a reflection of its 'mother' party in Britain, albeit much smaller. Despite this smallness, the SWP intends to stand candidates in forthcoming elections in the North. Elections to...sectarian institutions!

The Anarchists

The anarchist movement in Ireland as it stands today consists of the *Workers Solidarity Movement*, based in Dublin and the anarcho-syndicalist *Organise!* group, the local section of the *International Workers Association* (IWA), based mainly in Belfast. Outside these groups are various individuals active on both sides of the border. The Workers Solidarity Movement called for a boycott of the Referendum whilst Organise!-IWA was actually split on the issue. Some comrades argued in favour of a 'Yes' vote, in the hope that a space might be opened up for an anti-sectarian, working class politics, whilst others argued for abstention. A dissatisfaction with this lack of unity has led to the creation of a discussion group bringing together militants from both groups and none, to analyse the entire issue of the Peace Process and the anarchist response.

The conclusions to most articles on the Irish 'peace process' written by libertarian communists and anarchists usually amount to the obligatory call for the creation of independent working class organisation, a struggle against Orange and Green nationalism and workers unity. All of these are indeed necessary but their realisation is still far away. Working class resistance to the state, when not in the form of spontaneous outbursts of anger, mainly takes place through the Republican Movement (in the broadest sense). At the beginning of the modern stage of 'The Troubles' the Provisional IRA filled a politico-military vacuum, defending the working class Catholic community from sectarian attacks by the RUC, Loyalists and, eventually, the British Army. The recruiting sergeant for the Provos has been the reality of sectarianism and state violence. The hegemony of Republicanism over active resistance to state repression has rarely been seriously challenged. Within the context of an Imperialist sponsored 'peace process' which promises both a continuation of sectarian division and a *continuation of sectarian violence*, those who would create an alternative based upon an authentic revolutionary politics need to build a base in their communities and workplaces in order to make anarchism a alternative that can be taken seriously by our class.

Any readers interested in joining discussions on the way ahead for anarchists in Ireland should contact the co-ordinators at:
WSM, P.O.Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland.

Organise! Index

A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues No 14 – No 43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to ACF, to ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St. London E1 7QX

Genetix can really spoil your day

HARDLY A DAY goes by without some new article or revelation in the press about Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in food or Genetic Engineering (GM). The fight against this pollution of our food is growing and international. The whole issue brings into stark relief many of the less pleasant features of life in modern neo-liberal capitalist society. It shows how the power of international capital is becoming more powerful than that of many states. It shows how these companies use their power and influence to ride roughshod over the needs of working class and peasant people the world over. Furthermore the whole debate has become caught in up in a trade war launched by the USA aiming to remove from the scene such minor imperialist powers as Britain and France.

What they are doing?

Despite claims to be producing new variants of crops that will enhance productivity and crop yield, improve resistance to pests and save millions from starvation, the truth behind the biotech companies efforts the simple effort of all capital to produce more profit.

The most famous of the GMOs being used at the moment is soya produced by the American food giant Monsanto. Their soya has been 'engineered' to make it resistant to the insecticide Roundup - also produced by Monsanto. The idea is simple. Farmers who plant Monsanto's soya can spray the crops with no fear of them being damaged by the chemicals employed. Only bugs die. Monsanto then profit twice. Firstly they sell the seeds, then they sell the insecticide! Farmers are locked into a cycle of only buying from Monsanto.

Another well-known GMO is tomatoes. These have been altered by the incorporation of a fish gene. The effect is to keep them "fresh" longer. This was sold to consumers as a way of ensuring longer shelf life and hence reducing the chances of buying rotting food. In practice, agricultural businesses switched production of tomatoes away from high wage US farms to low wage South American areas. They were still able to pay to transport the tomatoes to the American market and still make extra profits.

A third and less well known example is the use of "Terminator" genes in seeds. This gene has the effect of stopping the plant producing fertile seeds. They claim that it will increase the yield of the crop and will provide more choices for the farmer by selecting high yielding seeds. The reality, of course, is to tie the farmers into dependency on Monsanto. Farmers are not able to save part of their seed crop to use to grow new crops the following year. This technology is being applied to cotton, particularly in India. It represents the final triumph of agri-businesses attempts to produce sterile crops.

The dangers

Some of the dangers of these crops are obvious:

- Pollen from GMOs can cross fertilise with non-GMO crops. The result is that all crops are GMO.
- Gene pollution cannot be 'recalled'. Once out there, it is there for good.
- GM crops can take more pesticides. This leads to greater pollution of the waterways.
- If all the bugs that feed on the crops are killed, what happens to the birds that feed on the bugs - or the other animals in the food chain?

Other dangers are less apparent:

- Genes cannot simply be inserted into plants. They need some means of getting inside the plants' cells. Often this is done by first attaching them to viruses. Scientists involved claim that the viruses are themselves modified to prevent dangers to health. There has already been evidence that some of the viruses used retain harmful effects. How will this effect the human immune system?
- Genes can spread from one species to another. This can lead to the growth of super-weeds.
- Genetic engineering is often linked with efforts to make plants and animals resistant to bacteria. The result can be the emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Resistance

Peasant farmers in India have recognised the dangers posed by the efforts of Monsanto. They have a long history of saving seed for use the following year and of giving seed to neighbours in need. As Monsanto have patented the seed and claim to hold copyright over it, they are now saying that the farmers are breaking the law if they try to retain some for future use. In Canada and the USA Monsanto have successfully prosecuted farmers. The reaction in India of the farmers has been to launch a Cremate Monsanto campaign, which has taken direct action and burned whole fields of GM cotton!

In Britain a campaign is well underway. Genetix Snowball have adopted the non-violent tactic of digging up some GMO crops. They have done so in the attempt to gain publicity and have courted arrest in their actions. So far they have been quite successful in getting their message across. They have also entered supermarkets and walked off with GMO foodstuffs, saying it was contaminated. Their actions in Manchester have caused embarrassment to Marks and Spencer who subsequently became one of the growing band of supermarkets to say they will source from non-GM suppliers. Other spectacular actions are planned. Other campaigners, often around local Earth First! Groups have gone in for the less public but equally effective tactic of simply trashing fields which contain GM crops.

The Government

Monsanto are now privately admitting that they are losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the British public. They are relying heavily on their friends in the government. The British New Labour Government has close links with biotech companies. This caused serious embarrassment to Lord Sainsbury, but less obvious are the efforts the biotech companies put into lobbying. The majority of the public may be against genetic engineering but 70% of MPs are said to be in favour!

Despite all the opposition, the state is only talking of a voluntary moratorium for a couple of years. Even this has less to do with worrying about us and more to do with nationalism and the looming trade war between Europe and the USA.

Banana Wars

In recent years, US foreign policy has aimed to displace British and French imperialism from Africa and replace it with US domination. This was the reality behind their support for the Tutsis in Rwanda and for the uprising in the then Zaire. These areas were within the French sphere of influence, now they are coming under US domination. Now they have turned their sights on the Caribbean. Here they aim to take the area out of British domination by the destruction of that region's main export, bananas. The destabilisation that will bring will provide the US with the excuse it needs to intervene financially or militarily, whichever is most convenient. Not only does this give the US the chance to get rid of the Brits; it also serves as a warning to the increasingly integrated European Union, which the US fears will become a real rival in years to come.

Hence the Banana Wars. The European response has been to increasingly adopt the line of a moratorium on the introduction of GM crops. This has a number of advantages for them:

- It is a stick to hit the US with, whilst at the same time being popular with populations already scared by BSE,E-Coli and Salmonella and who are understandably hostile to GM food.
- A moratorium allows them to pretend to do something but also to allow GM crops in at a later date when all the fuss has died down.
- It gives European biotech companies a chance to catch up in the development of new crops.

Against this background it becomes easy to see why the media, including an almost united press and the Tory Party are playing the anti-GM card whilst at the same time using it to whip up nationalist, anti-US feeling.

The danger is that popular opposition will fall victim to this con and will accept the almost inevitable moratorium when it comes as a victory. This will allow GM food in at a later date.

What can we do?

It is important to keep the campaign going. We would suggest that readers get in contact with their local Earth First! Group or Genetix Snowball and get involved with what is already going on. There are plenty of opportunities for action and they don't have to be scary direct action if that is beyond a person's abilities. Campaigns need support in many forms. Even collecting petitions outside supermarkets can be an effective way of talking to people and serves to further embarrass the shops and local government.

Above all, we must not be conned into thinking that a temporary halt in the planting of GM cops in this country is going to change anything. The fight needs to be to get rid of all GM foods before it is too late. Workers in Britain could do well to follow the lead of the Indian peasant farmers!

However, GM foods are just another example of the way that capitalists contaminate the food of working class people. Writing in the 19th century, Karl Marx noted that workers' flour was frequently mixed with chalk by shopkeepers. At the end of the 20th century the bosses have just got more clever! Most of the GM contaminated food is the cheaper processed food that busy working class people buy.

The only way we will ever be able to ensure that our food is healthy enough to eat is to get rid of the profit based system that encourages production to make money for the few rather than to satisfy the needs of all of us. When we have created a libertarian communist society, it will be the responsibility of the human community to make decisions as to whether science should be allowed to tinker with the basic genetic make-up of food. No doubt those will be difficult decisions to make, but we can be sure that they will be made on the basis of what is in the interests of the planet as a whole not to make a fortune for private investors or corporate employees.

Whose land is it anyway? Part 2

Get Off My Land!

THIS IS THE message the landowners of Britain have been giving working people throughout the centuries. And this message remains the same today. With the government backing down (what a surprise!) on its Right to Roam legislation the mass of the people remain not only excluded from the land unless the landowner deigns to grant access, but also excluded from any decision-making about what is *done* with this land. We need to question this myth of land 'ownership'. For, in fact, the whole land-owning system is based on theft. To understand this we need to go back to the times of the Norman Conquest.

Without romanticising the Saxon period (slavery was wide-spread and it was clearly a class system), peasants before the Norman conquest had a certain control over the land. Free, independent peasant owners called ceorls cultivated their own areas. They owed certain duties to the king, but there were no non-cultivating landowners. This situation started to deteriorate even before the Normans arrived. As a result of various military campaigns, lords were granted control over certain territories. The treatment and extent of the peasants' exploitation depended on the whim of the particular thegn (lord). Some peasants found themselves forced to sell land to the thegn and had to become wage labourers. However, there was still extensive common land which was available for grazing, fuel collecting and gathering.

The Norman Conquest fundamentally changed the Saxon system. The land was taken from the peasants and put firmly in the hands of a land-owning class whose sole aim was to manage the land for the benefit of themselves. William, who now claimed to own all the land, needed to reward the military. As a result he gave the barons and other knights the rights to tracts of land on the condition that they provide soldiers for wars. The ceorls lost their position as freeholders and became serfs. They could only use the land if they paid for it by providing free labour. Worse than not owning the land, they themselves were now owned by the barons. The whole basis of land ownership in Britain is thus based on conquest; the consequences of which are still with us today. Some landowners such as the Grosvenor family (present Duke of Westminster) trace their ownership back to this time. Their ancestor, Hugh Le Gros Veneur, was given major land holdings by William.

Blood Sports

It is not just a grossly unequal system of land ownership that dates from the Norman Conquest but also the tradition of blood sports, so dear to the hearts of the present ruling class. In many respects, this obsession with hunting is one of the primary influences on the way the land has been managed and developed. William was a passionate hunter and set aside huge areas of land for this purpose. 'Royal Forests' covered almost a quarter of England by the mid-12th century. And these 'forests', which included much more than forests, were subject to Forest Law, designed with the sole purpose of protecting and breeding game which William and his cronies could then kill. Forest officials made sure that grazing animals were kept out and even barons couldn't plough up the land. Poaching, of course, was a serious offence, often resulting in the death of someone who dared interfere with the King's pleasure. The barons and knights, eager to ape the King, also took to hunting and set up areas that were called 'Chases'. The most highly controlled areas, 'Deer Parks', were fenced and maintained by serf labour. Many of these places still exist and are often the main areas that the public is denied access to e.g. the 3,000 acres of Hulne Park owned by the Duke of Northumberland.

This system of land management was

developed purely for the satisfaction of the blood sports obsession. Not only did the peasants not benefit from it, it was hardly a productive use of land for the country as a whole. And the problem is that very little has changed. Though much land has now been turned over to agriculture and forestry, there are still huge areas, for example much of Scotland, where hunting is the main use of the land. it is still accepted that the ruling class can do what they will with their land, regardless of the impact on the rest of the community or on the land itself. But as we have seen, this 'tradition' is based on conquest and usurpation.

Struggles

Peasants did not succumb passively to the exploitation of the landowners. (See accompanying article). As a result of their struggles, some reforms were made. But the past 900 years have been a history of continuing exploitation. Reforms would be made and then a new form of exploitation would emerge, causing further resistance. By the 14th century there was a sort of social contract. Common land and common rights had been reduced but still existed. Peasants also had a right of passage over any land that was uncultivated, except deer parks and other hunting areas. Landowners had an obligation to see that the main tracks were maintained. The Forest laws were relaxed and Henry III started allowing the felling of the Royal timber, the killing of game and the cultivation of certain tracts of forest. Penalties were also reduced.

The development of agrarian capitalism in the 15th-17th centuries was the cause of some reforms but also created new forms of exploitation. Peasants could now sell food on the market rather than being tied to their lord, but with the decline of feudalism many were left in a position of insecurity. Landowners no longer had an obligation to the peasants. Between the 11th-17th centuries, the commercial motive predominated and this changed the nature of the land owning class to a certain extent. Henry VIII sold much of the confiscated church land to the emerging bourgeoisie and this process was accelerated under Cromwell. As capitalism became the dominant economic system, all landowners were forced to look for ways of increasing income from their land such as growing grain, raising livestock, forestry and land leasing.

Sheep

One of the main sources of income discovered by landowners was sheep, and this was to cause the erosion of the few rights the peasants did have, and would eventually contribute to the demise of the peasantry. The desire for sheep-grazing land led to an encroachment on common land, and an increased disregard for this peasant right. Common land was increasingly fenced off and used for sheep grazing. As they did not want to give up any of their hunting land, it was the common land they enclosed. The so-called English revolution, in fact, strengthened the position of the landowners. Half the members elected from the Midlands in Cromwell's Parliament had been fined for throwing people off common land or belonged to families who had. In 1646 the King no longer had ultimate control of the land and this was passed to the landowner, without giving any power to the peasants, causing further peasant revolts.

Capitalism, supposed to represent the overthrow of the feudal system by the new capitalist class did not change but instead reinforced many features of the old system. The power and ideology of the land owning class fused with and influenced the development of capitalism. Accumulation of wealth and the protection of private property was now an even stronger ideology perpetuated by the state. Parliament was dominated by landowners. The hunting obsession continued with renewed vigour; the landowners joined by reinforcements from the bourgeoisie. Sir Robert Walpole was Prime minister for 21 years and oversaw many of the enclosures. He was a keen hunter and would open the letters from his gamekeeper in Norfolk before the state papers.

Poaching

For the peasants, the situation seemed to get even worse under early capitalism. Laws against poaching were

tightened and deer stealing was punished by hanging. It was even forbidden for smallholders to own hunting implements like snares in case they took game that strayed onto their land. The Black Act (named after the poachers who blackened their faces) passed in the early 18th century created 50 new offences which were punishable by death. Common rights were also attacked more vigorously than they had been under feudalism. Landowners wanted their privately 'agreed' enclosures to have the backing of law. During the 18th and 19th centuries 7 million acres of land was enclosed. The enclosed land was used for sheep, mining and cattle rearing. In addition, access to the countryside was curtailed. The old tracks were blocked by enclosures. Traditional recreation activities of the peasants such as fairs and football couldn't take place because there was no available land. This was of course welcomed by the Calvinist capitalists who thought such activities detracted from a disciplined workforce. The end result was the end of the peasantry and their transformation into an urban working class or emigrant labour.

Corn Laws

In the 19th century, the urban middle class gained strength both economically and politically and there were moves toward the reduction of the influence of the landowners. The controversy over the Corn Laws symbolised this conflict. It was against industrial interests to have import restrictions on corn and there was a major campaign to repeal the Corn laws which had imposed these restrictions. This, of course, was opposed by the landowners. The eventual repeal of the Corn Laws was seen as a victory of the industrialists over the landowners. However, the power of the landowners was never effectively destroyed. As we saw in the last issue of *Organise!* there was too close a connection between the industrialists and the landowners. The redistribution of land and the emergence of more small farmers did not alter the fundamental system or its ideology. In many respects, the new owners were even more committed to the old ideology, including the interest in blood sports. The industrialists often were landowners themselves but they didn't need to own land to adopt the culture of the land owning aristocracy. They rented shooting rights, with the London rich taking hunting boxes in the shires. According to Sutherland (an academic writer on land ownership), "By the 1930s, however, foxhunting was completely unrepresentative of the countryside".

The 20th century brought considerable pressure for reform. But despite the passing of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in 1949, in terms of the mass of the people having any real access to the land itself or decisions about how the land is used, nothing has changed. Whether it is said by the Duke of Westminster or his ancestor the Norman bandit, the message is still the same: "Get Off My Land". It's about time we did something about it.

This is the second in the series on the Land which will continue in future issues of Organise!

The Struggle for the Land

Far from the bucolic picture of Arcadian bliss, of paternalistic big farmers and contented farm workers, the history of the countryside, and the struggle of classes in that countryside, is far, different.

When a poll tax (!) was introduced in 1381 to pay for the Hundred Years War with France, this acted as a spark to light the tinder of rural unrest. All taxes would be passed down to and be paid by those who toiled in the fields, and this was fully understood by them. 5,000 men armed themselves and attacked the King's tax collector in Brentwood, Essex. This inspired other uprisings throughout Essex and Kent.

Yeoman veterans of the war joined with the serfs. Wat Tyler, one of these ex-soldiers and an eloquent orator, was elected commander-in-chief in Kent. Capturing Canterbury, the movement liberated John Ball from prison. This wandering priest had been touring the country for 20 years preaching radical doctrines of levelling and the land to be shared in common. He was reported by the chronicler Walsingham to have preached: "Once the great ones had been cut off, men would all enjoy equal freedom, rank, and power, and share all things in common".

The peasants marched on London from both Kent and Essex. On the way they opened prisons and burnt records, some particularly hated lords and officials being killed. The original calls for the abolition of the old bonds, the right to commute services to rent, and all the other restrictions, began to escalate into an idea that the whole land owning class could be toppled. Unfortunately, through trickery and the lack of maturity of the movement, the uprising was crushed and its leading lights, including Tyler, Ball and Jack Straw, with 110 others were slaughtered. The promises of the King (to abolish serfdom, all feudal duties, the removal of all restrictions on freedom of labour and trade and a general amnesty for the rebels) were revoked. The last of the rebels were hunted down in East Anglia.

Uprising

Though the uprising had failed, the discontent continued, with serfs doing their feudal duties reluctantly, forcing the landowners to change over to rent from the serfs for cultivating their strips, using this rent to hire "free" labour.

With the relaxation of the forest laws in the mid 1300s, the rural poor began to drive their cattle into the deer parks and to take timber from the forests, and to poach, by stealth and by night. People began to squat in the forests and clear areas for agriculture. By the 17th century, these squatter communities, outside the dominion of the lords, had increased drastically. There 'masterless' men and women congregated, many driven out of their houses on the landowners' estates.

Unrest continued to simmer in the countryside. During the Jack Cade revolt against Henry VI in 1450, levelling elements met in the woods outside Hastings led by a carpenter, John Clipsham, demanding that all goods and the land be held in common.

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries there were hundreds of revolts against enclosure. In May 1607, for example, there was a month of widespread and continuous rioting in Northamptonshire where enclosure had been carried out on a massive basis. The landowners as lord lieutenants of the counties raised their own armies and put down the rebellion and many insurgents were executed. Despite this, disturbances continued in neighbouring counties.

In general, actions against the enclosures were on a guerrilla level, wildcat and uncoordinated. Fences and hedges, symbolising enclosure were broken down by the rural labourers in many areas over the course of 200 years.

The Civil War meant that the Parliament of Cromwell was dominated by landowners and this increased the rate of enclosure and the war of the landowners against the rural poor and landless. At the same time, this period of ferment also threw up new radical ideas.

A small group of unemployed labourers and landless farm workers gathered at St.George's Hill near Walton-on-Thames in Surrey in 1649, and began to cultivate the common land. Notable among them were Gerrard Winstanley and William Everard, who had been active as a Leveller in the Army. This group, known as the Diggers or True Levellers, issued a call for the people to have access to the forests and common lands. Harassment from the local landlords forced them to move to another site, and continued attacks resulted in their settlement being destroyed. Other Digger settlements sprung up throughout the southeast and midland counties.

Winstanley, the Diggers' chief theorist, argued against the whole idea of private property. He attacked the notion that the landowners had a right to the land and declared that they had stolen it from the mass of the population.

Poaching

The Diggers thought they could bring about a revolution and communism of the land through peaceful reasoning. The repression unleashed against them broke them up and by 1660 all radical publications were banned. In 1662 the Justices of the Peace were allowed powers to stop migration, effectively sabotaging the setting up of new Digger settlements.

The war of the landowners against the rural poor continued into the next century. Equally, defiance of enclosure continued, in small ways with the gathering of firewood, and in large-scale poaching and attacks on the landowners' property.

In the 1720s gangs of men with their faces blacked up invaded deer parks in the Home Counties, in particular the Royal forests. The death penalty was brought in to deal with the 'Blacks' and 16 were hanged in the next 2 years. Two gamekeepers were shot dead by the Blacks. Many Blacks died in prison, and many others were transported and about 40 became outlaws.

The Duke of Newcastle's steward wrote in 1763 (in Sussex) that: " I have got a list of about 10 poor wretches chiefly women and children that have been pilfering the woods this cold weather and intend having them all before a magistrate at the first proper opportunity and if I can prevail upon the justices to act as they ought shall get them whipped". Four months later another "stealer" of wood had his house torn down by the steward!

In 1830 country labourers rose in revolt throughout southern and eastern England. The hated threshing machines were smashed, ricks and barns were burnt down, all under the cover of darkness. Many threatening letters were sent to landowners. This movement became known as Captain Swing because of the signature on many of the letters. The revolt centred around low pay, piecework and the new technology of the threshing machines, which threw many out of work. Large crowds gathered protesting against these wrongs. In the following repression, 19 were executed and 552 transported to Australia, many others receiving prison sentences.

Solidarity of the urban workers with the rural poor was often expressed- after all, urban workers were rural workers or their descendants who had been driven from the land. In London, Thomas Spence, seen by some as an ancestor of anarchist communism, argued in the 1790s that " We must destroy not only personal and hereditary lordship, but the cause of them, which is Private Property in land". One of his disciples, Thomas Evans, at the end of the Wars wrote: "All the land, the waters, the mines, the houses, and all permanent feudal property, must be returned to the people".

Anyone got the cheesewire?

The heavy repression after Captain Swing meant that never again was there to be violent uprising on a mass scale. This step back from insurrection resulted in a turn towards the creation of unions. Even these attempts were met with persecution. The attempt by farm workers to organise in Tolpuddle in Dorset in 1834 resulted in the transportation of six of them.

The radicalism of Spense and Evans had little effect on the rural poor. They had little aspiration to seize the land from the rich. They were set on gaining some concessions, and were not very successful in that. Small concessions were gained. Instead of the land being seized by them, small parcels of ground were allowed them- allotments. And this only came in 1906 after 50 years of campaigning.
Joseph Arch.

In 1872 a new union was formed by agricultural workers. Under the leadership of Joseph Arch, a Warwickshire labourer, farm workers were organised all over England. Wage increases were gained in many areas.

The National Agricultural Labourers Union was short-lived. The years of bad harvest and agricultural decline reversed the gains of the union. The farmers set up a blacklist of those who were members. In 1877 the first shiploads of prairie wheat from North America put many of the labourers out of work. A disheartened Arch began to campaign for farm workers to emigrate to Australasia and the Americas, and in fact many did, further depopulating the countryside.

In Scotland those Highlanders who did not emigrate because of the Clearances settled on coastal smallholdings (crofts). The landowners put the squeeze on the crofters. The crofts were not large enough to maintain a whole family, so they were forced to work for the landowners. But there was a widespread belief that the land belonged to all. In 1881 some Skye crofters put out a petition demanding that the landowner Lord MacDonald return the land of Ben Lee to them. This was immediately rejected and the crofters started a rent strike. When a sheriff tried to serve notices on the crofters, a crowd of 150 physically attacked him and burnt the notices. The Sheriff of Inverness-shire sent 50 police to arrest the crofters. They were surrounded by local people and stoned, but the police managed to arrest 5 men regarded as ringleaders. The Highland Land League which grew out of these events rapidly gained support, and the government was forced to make some concessions like a rent tribunal and security of tenure as long as the rent was paid. Riots continued, however, because no extra land was granted to the crofters.

Rebecca Riots

In Wales in the 19th century, there was widespread destruction of enclosure fences as well as bread and corn riots. The most important of these were the Rebecca riots. From 1839 till 1844 throughout Wales hundreds of actions took place. Many tollgates along the roads were smashed, salmon weirs were destroyed because the game laws stopped the poor taking fish from the rivers, haystacks were burnt and poorhouses attacked. 150 police and 1800 troops were

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sent to quell this uprising.

New disturbances erupted in the 1880s in Wales caused by tenant farmers and labourers being charged high rents by the landowners. This time though, the Welsh Land League that resulted from this crisis was thoroughly constitutional and no direct action on a large scale took place.

From time to time, the old practice of smashing down enclosure fences re-emerged. In 1908 a landowner at West Preston Manor in Sussex decided that a lane running by his property was an inconvenience and had two gates put up at each end of the lane. The local villagers destroyed the gates. Again the landowner reerected them. This time the villagers turned out in force, accompanied by the village band and broke them down again. Local postcards of the event were produced!

During the 19th century, the idea that city dwellers should enjoy the countryside spread from the professional and artisan classes to the working classes. The open countryside and clean air were a solace to many used to crowded conditions and foul air. By the 1930s this had become a massive movement, with an estimated 15,000 people from Sheffield and 15,0000 from Manchester visiting the Peak District on an average Sunday.

However, large tracts of land were cut off from the ramblers. In 1935, there were only 12 footpaths in the Peak District. The best walking land, including Kinder Scout and Bleaklow Ridge, were fenced off. Ramblers started to organise annual rallies in the Peak District. In 1932 a new organisation, the British Workers Sports Federation began to organise rambles for young people in the north. It began to organise mass trespasses. In 1932, 400 ramblers organised a mass trespass of Kinder Scout. 5 ramblers were imprisoned and in response thousands joined two more mass trespasses.

The history of the British countryside is a history of struggle. The mass trespasses, the militancy of farm labourers, the repression are all things that should be known and learnt from, as we once again make the land an important issue that can mobilise thousands.

Henry (Hank) Skinner

For every 79 people charged with murder the death penalty irrevocably claims, one of those executed is an innocent person. Is such a price too high? Would you volunteer yourself as that person? It happens with all too depressing frequency in America, particularly so in the death dispensing state of Texas. For once again an innocent person's life is under severe threat from political imposition of the death penalty. Henry (Hank) Skinner, on death row since 1993, has friends on the outside so utterly convinced of his innocence that they spent thousands of dollars of their own money in trying to get the case re-opened. There is growing international concern too as the pressure in Texas mounts to 'legally' snuff out Hank's existence. A great deal of new evidence has been unearthed which proves that he could not have done that which he is accused and falsely convicted of, including a sworn affidavit from a key prosecution witness who confesses to having made "inaccurate and untruthful" statements, both to the police and to the jury trial. Compelling forensic evidence is also available to add weight to Hank's testimony. But nothing of this may stand to be taken into account as Hank Skinner fights desperately for his life. Texas District Attorney John Mann, in order to see Hank killed quickly is saying publicly: " It may be 12 to 18 months before we get a final decree in the case. That's not unduly lengthy by today's standards...if the death penalty is going to work as a deterrent, it's going to have to be handed down and imposed in short order." American politicians thrive on this heartless rhetoric and believe it makes them look tough in the voters' eyes. It doesn't matter that the votes are bought with blood. For Hank, it's simply a race against time now to raise sufficient funds to demonstrate against his conviction.

Effective legal representations in complex US murder cases are measured in dollars and vast sums are needed in order to hire legal and forensic expertise necessary to achieve this aim. Furthermore, according to recent Texas legislation, all available proof must be gathered and submitted now, before the first State habeas writ is filed, otherwise that evidence will be procedurally barred from consideration by any court in a subsequent writ and no amount of money will help matters- Hank Skinner will simply be executed. As a matter of utmost urgency, because Hank is forced to rely on public charity to help him establish the real facts of his case, many thousands of dollars are needed if he is to have even the slimmest chance of avoiding execution. Those who know Hank to be innocent have exhausted their own finances trying to save his life. There is nothing more financially they can do except to appeal to as wide a public as possible on behalf of an innocent man's life. If anyone can help in any way contact:

Pastor Albert Maggard PO Box 1451, Pampa, Tx 79066-1451USA and Henry Skinner 999143, Ellis One Unit, Death Row, Huntsville TX 77343 USA.

For information via the Internet: www. cyberspace-inmates.com/skinner.htm and www.cdinet.demon.co.uk.

Email: Alandmary@netjava.com

ANARCHIST ABC BLACK CROSS
Abolish crime. Abolish prison.

OUT AGAIN!

The Anarchist Movement in Japan. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese Anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. The ACF have just reprinted this popular ACE pamphlet. £1.80 plus SAE from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Brandon, lies, slanders and prisoner support

A statement by the ACF

Mark Barnsley is an anarchist prisoner inside for defending himself against a gang of students (see issues 47 and 50 of Organise!). Letters from Brandon of the Justice for Mark Barnsley Leeds support group have accused Mark Rebel from Sheffield ACF of trying to sabotage the Mark Barnsley defence campaign, and Frankie Dee the ACF's prisoners liaison officer of conspiring with Mark Rebel in this and of lying about it. Brandon has spent a lot of time criticising, and indeed hurling abuse, at anarchists. He vented his spleen on Chumbawamba, then ex-Class War people grouped around Smash Hits, amongst others. Now he is using his support of Mark Barnsley as a way of attacking the Anarchist Black Cross and the ACF as apparently we don't match up to his high standards. We are writing this statement in support of the ACF's national and international prisoner support work and the work done by our Prisoner Liaison Officer, and in protest at Brandon's condemnation and criticism of the ACF. In doing so we make a number of points, though we speak only for ourselves, as anarchist communists.

Firstly, the ACF as an organisation does not offer unconditional support to all prisoners. ACF members spend a lot of time on prisoners support but we are not primarily a prisoner support organisation. While we may be working for the day when all prison doors are thrown open, this is a far cry from working to free all prisoners now, no matter what their crime and the circumstances that made them prisoners. This means that as an organisation, we consider all requests for support, including Mark Barnsley's on merit and according to the resources we have available. We do not make judgement on whether a prisoner is 'guilty' or 'not guilty' as capital and the state decide what is a crime. If we do not choose to support any particular prisoner, it does not mean that we consider him or her 'guilty'; or not worth our support, nor does it make us 'class traitors', 'middle class wankers' or 'dickheads'. We support Mark Barnsley and hope he will be released soon.

Secondly, as a non-hierarchical federation of anarchist communists we work together in solidarity but we cannot order what our members do like a Leninist party would. So, if on the one hand an individual member wants to give unconditional support to a prisoner while another gives other prisoners higher priority or refuses to support a particular prisoner that is up to them.

You might find this contradictory but we are not a monolithic organisation compelling members to toe a party line.

Rather we are a group of people sharing certain basic principle of thought and action in solidarity, which we call, proudly, anarchist communism.

Thirdly, nothing about our principles compels us to work in solidarity with people who oppose and constantly criticise our views or ways of working, though we may be willing to debate areas of disagreement. Nor are we, as anarchist communists, compelled to support every cause embraced by others in the movement. As free individuals we make those judgements for ourselves and speak only for ourselves when we do so, allowing others to take different positions and act in different ways. This is as much a principle we apply to prisoner support work as to all other aspects of the class struggle.

On that basis a member of the ACF is free to state that they are not supporting Mark Barnsley's fight for freedom (if any members have said such a thing) and neither you nor we can compel them to say why. Freedom not to speak is as much a basic tenet of the free society as intimidation and coercion to tell all is of the police state. One of our members has been accused of hindering support for Mark Barnsley but not how or in what way. There have been many accusations but few facts. Another ACF member has been accused of colluding in this, of knowing things he could not know and does not know without saying what these things are. This is the language of the show trial: invent a crime and then get the defendant to explain how they came to be guilty.

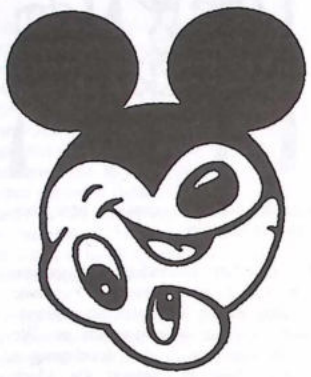
Brandon has demanded explanations. The ACF as an organisation has done nothing wrong and owes no explanations to those who threaten us. We would add though that developing a broader base of support for Mark Barnsley is more likely to be achieved by propaganda and campaigning than by digging dirt or demands that we fall into Brandon's party line. Our article in Organise! 47 stated our position. We believe Mark Barnsley to be a victim of an injustice. We commended his courage and solidarity with the Hungry For Justice campaign. We encourage people to help Mark by contacting a support group. We may do more. But if we do it will be because Mark deserves our support and not because his so-called supporters threaten us with broken legs or a 'weeding out'.

In the class struggle truth is often the first victim but it is always the innocent who suffer. We have not enjoyed spending our precious time responding to malicious slanders when our time could have been spend more constructively (for example discussing the Balkans war or the Mumia Must Live! campaign). The record of the ACF on prisoner support speaks for itself and that is our final word.

This statement was written by the National Secretary of the Anarchist Communist Federation, based on a letter written by Merseyside ACF and as instructed by the National Delegate Meeting of 10.4.99

DISNEYFICATION

Nostalgia ain't what is used to be



DISNEY IS ONE of the world's biggest and most influential corporations. In this article we focus on the movies and theme parks, which they specialise in, and look at the effect of Disneyfication - the process of turning the real, physical world into a sanitised, safe, 'entertaining', predictable but profitable 'hyper-real' replica.

The introductory plaque at the entrance to Disneyland, written by Walt Disney himself, reads 'Here age relives fond memories of the past...youth may savour the challenge and promise of the future'.

Nostalgia is fundamental in understanding the appeal of Disney products for many people. It was an explicit part of Disney's original vision of Disneyland as 'an extremely sentimental and nostalgic place'; later he declared that it would be a place where the older generation would reminisce about the nostalgia of earlier years. It is, however, nostalgia for a mythical past.

'The whole idea is escape from reality into a place where you can simply have fun. Life is full of problems, but it is our job to stop harsh reality intruding.... Euro-Disney has a turn of the century feel...research shows that it is an era that most nationalities feel most comfortable with...we're trying to design what people think they remember about what existed'(Fred Beckenstein, senior vice-president of Euro-Disneyland Imagineering).

Nostalgia is a key element also in the tendency to disregard conflict - there is no politics, tragedy or poverty. Nostalgia is deployed to create a feeling of childhood innocence and naiveté, which legitimises ignoring the historical (and current) realities for many Americans - including children- those of class conflict, exploitation, racism, poverty and abuse. It is a white, conventional, middle class view of childhood that disempowers and exploits children. Visitors participate in the park as passive spectators, reduced to the 'ideal' child-like condition of being acted upon rather than acting. The sense of a return to childhood is the basic appeal of many Disney products, the essence of this nostalgia. A deep nostalgia for one's personal past is engendered because it is hard, even for children, to fully enter the pretence - ' I wish I were still a baby! I wish I were younger!' was the response of a six year old girl to Disneyland. It is probable however, that even if her wish were granted, that she would still not have experienced it as totally real. This is a created longing for a past that never existed.

For adults there is probably also often an additional layer of nostalgia in the parks, the longing for a return to the nation's (mythical) childhood innocence. In spite of the fact that artefacts are frequently dislocated from their historical contexts, there is a sense of historical progression from an exciting and misty past to an even more exciting, but still misty, future. There is an ambiguous sense of the present as deficient in the Disney parks; the essentially optimistic pictures of the past and future act to reconcile people to the barely outlined present. This sense of deficiency is a fundamental part of the consumerist impulse: it can only be addressed (within capitalism) by buying a product or service, though satisfaction is only temporary and fleeting.

The deletion by the Imagineers of the negative features of reality is an admission that something is not right with the status quo. Many park visitors view them as places of safety in a world of danger; they may also fear the future. The combination of these two feelings results in a celebration of the certainties of the past. This nostalgia allows the present to be cast in a more favourable light, and the future, since it is represented in the Disney parks by unremarkable features that people have some familiarity with, so that they can feel nostalgia forwards too!. Nostalgia here is also about people accepting their present position; the way in which past, present and future are dissolved into one another helps to render the present more agreeable. The growth of deliberate, synthetic nostalgia is closely linked with consumption; capitalism, which must constantly change and expand or die, destroys the past at an ever faster rate, then strives to sell back a version of it. Disney's fabricated nostalgia such as Main Street (which was not a clean, commercially prosperous strip) is also a mask for the commercial realities behind it.

History?

The past is often displayed as zany/ humorous. Household gadgets of previous times are made to look unfeasibly quaint and inefficient; in *the Carousel of Progress* Mum marvels that her new washing machine takes only five hours to do a wash. Bicycles are shown to be inefficient because their riders are vulnerable to attacks from dogs or falling off into mud, the first traffic jam is depicted by a horse upending a cart. Thus the problems of the past were either insignificant, or can easily be overcome by current knowledge and expertise. Another strategy is to leave out all elements of history (and the present) that would detract from the intended upbeat message/white middle class worldview. So, no mention of depressions, strikes, labour wars, factory or mine workers, mass protests; none of the squalour in which immigrants lived, lynchings, ghettos and apartheid for the black population, the treatment of Native American Indians; nothing of crime, wars, acid rain, the arms race. Tokyo Disneyland omits Japan's wars with China and Russia, Nanking, Pearl Harbour, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The problems caused by corporations are mostly ignored or glossed over: ecological horrors, dehumanising work, weapons production, 'third world' exploitation. Another 'experience' in Disney World, EPCOT's (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) *Future World* is more realistic, acknowledging that there are problems. The horse overturning the cart locates traffic jams safely and humorously (sic) in the past however; the film *Symbiosis* shows dust bowls, pollution, and despoiling of forests, but then veers off into fantasy to show corporate solutions to these mistakes as fish return to cleaner rivers etc. Difficulties are turned into opportunities, Jo Consumer can relax in the knowledge that the Corporations have the present and future safely in hand.

Family Favourites

For Disney , 'the important thing.... is the family...that's been the backbone of our whole business, catering to families'. The family was (and is) an important theme of many of the studios most important films such as *Bambi* and *Snow White*. The characters in the various rides in Sleeping Beauty Castle (in Disneyland) are subject to frightening adventures when they are separated from their traditional family situations. When they are punished it is for naughtiness rather than sin. Happy endings are achieved by the fantasy figures with their safe return to their families (Alice, Pinocchio, or Wendy), or when family life is about to be romantically established (Snow White or Sleeping Beauty with their Princes). Everything is OK within the protective embrace of the patriarchal family freed from enemies within such as stepmothers (the evil older woman) or outside like Fire-Eater the Showman.

Disneyland was founded on the premise of an amusement park for adults and children i.e. families. Disney attractions are full of happy couples and families: in EPCOT's *Horizons* ride guests are taken on a ride looking at how the future was conceived in the past, then transported to the future in the form of Future Port, meeting a family and their home. The future is seen through the experiences of a gradually ageing father and mother who have children, who in turn have children. In the Carousel of Progress the family is the focus for seeing changes in material circumstances over time. While waiting for the S.F. rock fantasy, *Captain EO*, the crowd see a sickly series of Kodak sponsored photos showing the cycle of the couple, babies, growing up, courtship, marriage, and back to babies. The conventional nuclear family is secure and will survive; in many attractions adults only appear as parents.

What of 'unconventional' families such as single parent or gay, and divorce, separation and death which are also part of many childrens' experiences?. The crucial point here however, a continuous theme in park attractions, is that family is the context where consumption takes place: the family buys the electrical gadgets in *Horizons* and *Carousel of Progress*, and the cameras and film outside *Captain EO*.

The association of the family unit with consumption provides a powerful image which connects the purchase of the sponsors products with the family, the context in which most people visit Disney parks. It is also the context in which products at the theme park will be consumed in the merchandise shops, restaurants etc., reinforcing the consumerist goals of the parks. It is debatable whether the parks are for children; the ratio of adults to children is 4:1.

Adverts for Disneyland are often aimed at adults, arguably the construction of parks so that the "outside world" of work and humdrum existence is invisible, is more likely to appeal to adults. They are the ones who pay, and the parks' nostalgia is far more likely to appeal to them. Disney books and films similarly use symbols from the adult world, such as heroes looking like Cary Grant, and heroines like Hollywood starlets. The appeal of the parks to adults has been crucial to their success. In the middle of despair at the losses of Euro Disney in 1994 (nearly £500 million in the year to September 1993), the company targeted the older generation of over-55s, after finding that the park had a significant appeal to them (nostalgia). Adults enjoy the memory of discovering the new, such as Peter Pan, Swiss Family Robinson, Cinderella etc., and the nostalgic recollections of (mythical) place such as Maine Street. EPCOT is cloaked in emphases about corporations and the future; in World Showcase children are almost totally displaced, as most of the attractions are models of buildings (Eiffel Tower, St Mark's Square) and landscapes. Similarly the British pub, German Beer Hall and waitress service restaurants, the demystification of the Animation Tour and nostalgia of the Great Movie Ride are adult oriented. Engaged parents are more likely to revisit, and to consume - merchandise, drinks, and food.

One of the main appeals of the parks is that they are safe havens in a world of fear and threat (real and imagined). They are successfully targeted at a white, middle class audience through close association with bourgeois values and interests through cleanliness, safety, concern for the customer and the relatively high entrance fee.

Reel Nature

As the world becomes increasingly urbanised, many people's main or only experience and understanding of the rest of nature is via films, television and packaged tourism. The Disney corporation has been - and remains- one of the main mediators.

For Disney the main value of the natural world is as a source of exploitation for profit. In the early days this took the form of praising the virtues of logging, mining and urban development, now it is the right to define nature that Disney (& other corporate capital) covets. In the earliest Disney productions nature appeared as deadly threat, or in the anthropomorphic form of humanoid animals. *Bambi* (1942) saw the beginning of the current form of portrayal, the animals no longer lived human lives, but had nevertheless transformed into people; the killing of Bambi's mother by the Hunter becomes murder. Bambi was the forerunner of Disney's later wildlife films, particularly the pseudo-documentaries such as *True Life Adventures*.These used captive animals which were coached to follow human scripts.

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These distortions can be seen as part of a North American artistic tradition. Writers such as Ernest Seton Thompson had a huge readership for their exciting, detailed fictions about the lives of wild animals. By 1910 they were exposed and discredited as the 'nature fakers'; naturalist John Burroughs suggested that Seton's masterwork should have been called 'Wild Animals I (Alone) Have Known'. Disney admitted the ruse from the start saying the intention was entertainment rather than education; but was still blasted by critics. Animals were labelled 'courageous', 'jolly', 'lonely', 'treacherous' etc. Animal mothers were praised or condemned using the ideal WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) human family as a yardstick. The film *Bear Country* showed the never-in-nature feature of a bear family consisting of 'den-wife' mum, and breadwinning hunter dad: in fact, fathers quite often eat the cubs if mothers aren't careful - an inconvenient fact that does not fit Disneyfication.

In *White Wilderness*(1958) the filmmakers put a handful of lemmings on top of a large snow-covered turntable, and filmed their movements from different angles; later they were herded over a precipice above a river. In the film the lemmings actions were depicted as a suicidal migration to the sea (in landlocked Alberta). Consequently, although this behaviour is unknown in nature, many people now 'know' that lemmings commit mass hari kiri, and their name has become synomonous with thoughtless mass self-destruction.

In the 1960s, work moved from 'mockumentary' to Seton-style animal story. The formula was the adoption of a young male animal by a soft-hearted human; the animal grows up in the household until the destruction caused by its wild energy and instincts forces its release. The now adult animal finds a wife, cue credits. Resource extraction is depicted as part of nature, though wild animals need to be managed and kept out of the way in sanctuaries so as not to interfere. Another film type (e.g. *The Horse In The Gray Flannel Suit*) depicted very anthropomorphised animals; in the 'Incredible Journey' three marooned pets made their way home across the 'threatening' wilderness. Millions saw these films, through cinemas, television serialisation, and in school, making their messages very influential.

The 'wilderness' parts of the Disney theme parks reinforce these messages for example *Jungle Cruise* and *Mine Train Through Nature's Wonderland*. Disney World is a huge park in the Everglades of Florida, basically a major city in a fragile ecosystem. It has caused great damage for example 'Wilderness Lodge' a pseudo National Park Lodge without the dirt and insects, and with 725 rooms and 4 restaurants. In the newly opened 500 acre Animal Kingdom in Orlando, everything is way over the top, which must be why David 'corporations are alright' Bellamy endorses it. The centrepiece is a massive synthetic baobab Tree of Life, 14 stories high, made from steel and painted rockwork. The 8000 branches sway in the wind generated by giant expansion units; the 103,000 leaves have all been sewn on by hand. The roots house a zoo, the tree a tiny 430 seat 3D cinema. There is a torrent of detail - even the details have details, and the incidentals have incidentals pasted on. The 'authenticity' is based on miracles of effort and expense: the landscape artist travelled through 37 states and 28 countries to find the right greenery, collecting over 600 species of tree, 350 different grasses and 1800 shrubs, vines, mosses, epiphytes and perennials. The flat, featureless sea level landscape was supplied with mountains, gullies, savannah and jungle with the import of a million cubic yards of rock, and the shovelling of 4.4 million cubic yards of earth; 1000 animals were imported. Predators such as the lions appear to be able to prey on giraffes and antelope, they are in fact separated by an invisible moat (and returned to pens at night).

The Washington Connection

The nature attractions of the theme parks borrow the films' pacing as well as their themes. The endless hours of silence, slow changes in sky and light, heavy progress up gradients of true wilderness experience are banished as boring. Seasons cycle before you finish your popcorn. The consequence of this 'industrial nature' (a form of hyper-reality that is more 'realistic' than what it represents) is that when people encounter a natural unenhanced environment, it seems flaccid and lifeless. The resident wildlife is uninteresting (and won't appear to order) and devoid of musical accompaniment. In 1995, Disney reached an agreement with most of the US federal land management agencies to supply interpretative services for visitors to public lands. It has since provided tour guide training to federal land managers. As part of the corporate sponsored American Recreation Coalition Disney is pressuring Washington to actively promote commercial recreation on public lands. The majority of park visitors favour industrially-oriented tourism, so this could foreshadow an avalanche of heli-skiing sightseers, snowmobilers, powerboaters and camper vans heading for the newest Disney Wilderness Lodge and Visitor Centre, with the accompanying despoliation and destruction.

All Power to the Imagination

Disney's influence derives from its association with playfulness based on animation, films, parks as films, and its promise of making childhood dreams come true- for both children and adults.

This playfulness consists of predictable, controlled experiences- the negation of play which is unpredictable, spontaneous and controlled by the participants. The corporation's misty nostalgia serves to disguise consumption, obscure the inadequacies of the present and bridge the gap into a higher future care of technological progress managed by General Electric, General Motors, Coca Cola and their corporate mates.

The myths of childhood, family and progress are a powerful drug. We need to wake up to the smell coming from these maggot-eaten corpses and collectively seize and create the present and future.

Books

The East End Years: A Stepney Childhood. Fermin Rocker. Freedom Press. £7.95 192 pages

RUDOLF ROCKER WAS one of the foremost anarchists of the early Twentieth Century. His work amongst East London Jewish workers in his capacity as editor of the Yiddish language radical periodical ARBETER FRAINT (Workers' Friend) has become almost legendary, whilst his international reputation as a propagandist was, at the time, probably second to none. Unfortunately, little of what he wrote has been translated into English, the only exceptions to this being the magisterial Nationalism and Culture and his seminal and widely read Anarcho-Syndicalism. London Years, a drastically abridged and, in Rocker's eyes, badly translated edition of his own several thousand page autobiography is unfortunately no longer available. Bearing this in mind, Freedom Press's recent publication of the East End Years is all the more welcome. An autobiographical account of life in the Rocker household by Rocker's son, Fermin, the book opens with the author's first memories of life in Stepney at the turn of the century, and ends with his eventual reunification with his father after years of imprisonment for anti-war agitation.

Family Life

The book itself is written in a clear, simple and attractive way, and is illustrated throughout with a series of Fermin's own line drawings. Other than the closeness of the Rocker family, several themes quickly emerge, the most obvious of which being the strength of the predominantly Jewish radical community at that time, and the importance that they in turn placed upon respect for culture and the development of strong international links. The sheer passion and intensity with which activists conducted their day-to-day business also shines through, the anarchist message having an optimism and vibrancy which has since been partially lost. Similarly, although Fermin paints a warts and all picture of the Anarchist movement and is in fact quite open about sectarian divisions, unity against the common enemy seems to have been the consensus with well developed support networks for those falling on hard times being the norm rather than the exception.

What makes Fermin's account unusually readable however, is his ability to place both politics and the life of his family within the context of East End society at that time, a context which, in turn, gives the narrative much more body and depth than is typically seen in political writings. We learn as much, for example, about colourful local characters on the streets and about Fermin's friends in the tenements as we do about Anarchist ideology, so much so that when the "outside" world enters in to beat strikers and imprison activists, its' cold, profit-driven brutality is felt all the more.

Towards the end of his life, Rudolf Rocker was to lose much of his earlier militancy, his support for the Allied cause in World War II, and his grudging acceptance of the "need" for social democratic and reformist organisations in the absence of more revolutionary currents being particularly indicative of this. Nonetheless, Rocker has no doubt earned his place in the Anarchist hall of fame, and Fermin's heartfelt account serves as a fitting testimony to that part of his life anarchists would wish to remember him by. A readable and moving account, it can't be beaten.

Arrest

The arrest of Rudolf Rocker

No Gods, No Masters. Edited by Daniel Guerin. AK Press Vol. 1 £11.95 294 pages; Vol. 2 £11.95 276 pages.

THE LATE DANIEL Guerin, librarian communist veteran active in several French organisations, intellectual and gay activist, put this anthology of writings together in French in 1965. A revised edition appeared in 1980, of which this is an English translation. We should be grateful for this collection which assembles many important texts, some familiar to British Anarchists, some, and very important ones at that, never before translated into English.

And yet...and yet, the collection assembled by Guerin points to a certain amount of confusion in his own thought. It is rather surprising to find the begin-

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ning sections of Volume 1 devoted to the grandfather of individualism, Max Stirner. Guerin regularly affirmed the class nature of anarchism. At this point in time when the book was assembled, Guerin was under the influence of the oppositional Marxism that had influenced his early life and which he never entirely shook off and the anarchism of synthesis (which attempted to reconcile individualism, anarchosyndicalism and anarchist communism in the same organisation) that he had come across when he joined the Federation Anarchiste in the 60s.

In his foreword to the last book he wrote *A La Recherche d'un communisme libertaire* he acknowledged his mistake and noted having distanced himself from classical anarchism. Some class struggle anarchists still persist with the idea of a common heritage encompassing both Stirner, Emile Armand, Zo D'Axa alongside Bakunin, Kropotkin, Makhno and Durruti.
But the individualist current entered into the anarchist movement at a time of defeat and weakness, and was indeed a sign of that defeat and weakness. Ever since, throughout the world, it has continued to weaken anarchism, sabotaging organisation, serious agitation amongst the mass of the people, clear analyses and development of anarchist programmes. For a self -avowed libertarian communist and devotee of class struggle anarchism to have started off such an important collection is a sign of chronic confusion!

Proudhon

The same with the next section on the French activist and thinker Proudhon. For too long Proudhon has been seen as the real founder of the anarchist movement. It is true that he used the expression anarchist on a number of occasions. But he is equally one of the pioneers of socialism in general. Marx owes a lot to him, even though the German philosopher was to turn on him as time went by. Proudhon has many reactionary ideas, including praising the patriarchal family and a strong contempt for women. Many anarchists were to be deeply embarrassed by these ideas- for example Elisee Reclus. Proudhon believed in a peaceful evolution to a society of mutualism, which retained many of the characteristics of the market under capitalism. In no way was he a collectivist or communist. Whist he developed ideas around federalism, which did have an influence on the anarchist movement, his ideas on abstention from elections, which also profoundly influenced the anarchist movement, were contradictory and far from being a constant (Proudhon did use the electoralist tactics on some occasions)

It would have been far better if Guerin had started off with the foundation of international anarchism within the growth of the international workers movement (the First International) and then made some references to Proudhon, to whom far too much of Volume 1 is devoted.

These failings are in part made up by the inclusion of texts by Bakunin, Cesar de Paepe, Schwitzguebel and Guillaume and finally Kropotkin in Volume 1. In particular, the previously untranslated texts of De Paepe, Schwitzguebel and Guillaume are very interesting and are correctly grouped under the title Direct Action and Libertarian Construction. Guillaume's essay on Ideas on Social Organisation is indeed an anarchist programme, clearly revolutionary in its outlook. Indeed Guillaume is seen to be clearly breaking with his much admired friend Bakunin on the subject of anarchist collectivism and developing towards an anarchist communist position. This means that instead of work being the criterion of distribution, it would be need, From each according to his ability, to each according to his need. The idea of the federation of communes as the basis of the new society comes to the fore, although Guillaume is ambivalent about who will "own" the workplaces, those who work in them or the whole of society.

And Finally...

In Volume 2 we have a far better selection, from the great activist Malatesta, to various texts on anarchosyndicalism and the experiences of the Russian and Spanish Revolution. It is unfortunate that Guerin's past confuses his analyses. Guerin had a long association with the group around Marceau Pivert, organised in the left of the SFIO (forerunner of the French Socialist Party) A bit like the British Independent Labour Party, this group had a particular, and sometimes critical , relationship with the Trotskyists. So Guerin talks about the "respect due to the memory of a great revolutionary such as Leon Trotsky" while in the same breath talking about the repression and slaughter he unleashed against the Makhnovists and anarchists in the Ukraine. Trotsky and Lenin get off a bit too lightly, in my opinion, for their involvement in the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising. Also notable by their absence are any writings by the Platformist tendency of revolutionary anarchism or any mention of the Friends of Durutti, the important anarchist current which emerged during the Spanish revolution. No mention of the Platformists is particularly odd as Guerin was more than familiar with their contribution to French anarchist communist thought.

Also, some sloppy proof-reading is apparent throughout the two volumes, something noticeable with other AK publications. (Unlike with *Organise!*, of course...- proof-reader) Nevertheless, an important and interesting work that, in general, enriches the body of anarchist writings available in English.

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.
Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for *revolution* to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.
London ACF are proud to announce the appearance of a new pamphlet in the Stormy Petrel series:
A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.
All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.
Coming next: ***The Italian Factory Councils 1920-21***.

Letters

Dear Anarchist Communist Federation comrades,

I am Silvano Pelissero and I am enclosed in a house prison.

I write only French and Spanish. I can write to you in English because today I have a friend that helps me.

I received with pleasure your magazine, Organise!. I read your article, the Repression in Italy with interest. But I must bring to your attention a big mistake. On 6th March 1998 the police arrested 3 anarchist squatters: Silvano Pelissero; Eduardo Massari and Soledad Maria Rosas. Massimo Passamani was arrested, if I remember well, in the spring of 1996. He was arrested in a Paris street and he was accused of giving a false passport to the police. In Italy Massimo was accused of being a militant in the 'Revolutionary Organisation of Anarchist Insurrectionalists (ORAI). We anarchists know that the ORAI is an imaginary creation of Judge Antonio Marini. Comrade Massimo is actually at liberty, on parole.

I was arrested on the streets of Valusa. Soledad and Eduardo were arrested in the squat in Collegmo city called "The House". Edo and Sole were held in the prison of Torino city. On 28th March 1998 Edo Massare committed suicide in Vallette Prison (Torino). Sole was released from prison and was put under house arrest in a village near Cuneo called Benevagienna. After Edo's death I was transferred to a special prison in Novara city where there are other anarchist comrades and a lot of comrades of the Red Brigades.

I want to remind you that in Novara prison there is also the well known Swiss comrade, Marco Camenisch

In June 1998 I started a hunger strike in protest against the repression and against the manufactured 'VALSUSA-TAV-GREY WOLVES'. On 11th July 1998 Maria Soledad Rosas committed suicide. After a new state murder and my hunger strike I was transferred to Sanponso.

The situation now: The trial against me starts on 22nd February. I am accused of terrorism and of being a militant of the 'Grey Wolves'. My defence is very difficult because there is a lot of forged evidence against for the prosecution. This evidence is the work of a secret service infiltrator. The same forged evidence determined 5 year prison sentence for Pratizia Maria Grazia Cadeddu. The Marini ORAI trial is continuing in Rome in spite of made-up evidence. International solidarity is very important however because this trial goes unnoticed by the European community.
I send you a document for my liberation. Please translate it and spread it.
See you soon.

A revolutionary salutation.
Silvano Pelissero

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP, Scotland.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

RESISTANCE

THE ACF HAS now produced 3 issues of our agitational *Resistance*, keeping to our bi-monthly schedule. The latest one (No.3) has articles on the "low-intensity" war in Iraq, GM foods, the Czech anarchist Michal Patera, and the Diggers. A supplement on the war in the Balkans was also rushed out for this issue and will at the time of writing be available for the demonstration against both the war in the Gulf and the war in the Balkans. For the second issue a London supplement on the threatened eviction of the 121 Centre in Brixton was also produced.

ACF comrades have been incredibly active in distributing Resistance (as well as selling *Organise!*) on the recent Civil Rights demo, anti-immigration controls demo,a Civil Rights demo and a demo against repression in Turkey- both in Haringey, 2 anti-war demos and street sales in Barking and Camden, at the Critique conference and a rally against repression in Turkey in Trafalgar Square (all in London) as well as the anti-war demo in Cardiff and the low-pay demo in Newcastle.

Resistance has appeared at an important time. Our widespread distribution of our agitational bulletin means more and more people are coming in contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when there is growing disgust at the Labour Party, and the Stalinist and Trotskyist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged work. Unfortunately, on too many occasions, ACF comrades are often the only anarchists to be seen on mobilisations, often with the only organised anarchist contingent. When other anarchists do appear, they are few in number, and sometimes choose not to march in a united bloc with us. Ah well, we're not discouraged.

If you would like the next 6 issues of Resistance send POs, cheques payable to 'ACF' to ACF c/o84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley) London E1 7QX. Better still take bundles of Resistance to distribute in your area.

ACF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

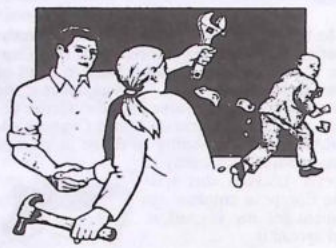
The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian Esperanto and Spanish translations of our *Aims and Principles* are also available for 20p plus postage.
Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Workplace Notes

We begin a new series in Organise! where workers in different industries and enterprises give an account of the situation where they work. In this issue a railworker speaks.



I work in the railway industry and right now is an interesting time for a revolutionary on the line on which I am based. We are among the first in the industry to undergo, as a result of privatisation, a scheme of total labour restructuring. The consortium which owns the line plans to replicate the strategy which they used following the deregulation of the buses, which is basically to buy a company, break the union, hammer the workers, so reducing their costs and making the firm a lot more attractive to prospective buyers. The end result is a vast increase the value of their shares. (Add to this share option schemes and they are forecast to make millions).

What this restructuring entails from the workers point of view is a massive drop in both pay and conditions - more unsociable hours, no weekend and bank holiday bonuses, very little paid overtime, huge variations in shifts from week to week, and every shift which we are to work being rostered to the minute a full year in advance. (While we cannot change our rosters at all management can change our hours and place of work at will, with very little notice to us).

So why, you may be asking, did workers accept this new deal, especially in a highly unionised industry like the railway?

The simply answer is that people never did. 85% rejected the scheme at ballot, but when management called a second ballot, and began threatening people, the advice of the union reps (ASLEF, RMT and TSSA) was to accept the deal as it was "the best that we can get". Tragically, just enough people's bottle went (largely due to the fact that they were so used to the union reps fighting for them that they had forgotten how to fight for themselves) for management to get the vote second time round. Restructuring was implemented.

So why did the union reps cave in to the wishes of the bosses? Why did they not encourage everyone to fight for what they have got, and more?

The first answer is that all this happened not long after New Labour won the General Election. No union leader in the country would have wanted to risk upsetting Tony Blair, and so the order to the reps from above would have been that industrial action was not an option. Hence "the best that we can get" means best through talking with management.

The second answer is that, as management were fully aware, the union hierarchy had become totally detached from its membership. The rot no doubt set in years ago with the same reps preferring to spend more time splitting hairs with the same bosses over details than talking to the people that they are supposed to be speaking for. This reached a climax with discussions about the content of restructuring, which saw them locked away together for days on end. When the new scheme was made public it was a case of management **and** the unions trying to sell us the deal.

Finally, as soon as restructuring was brought in the union reps were the first to be offered lucrative severance deals, which most shamelessly accepted.

So, where does this leave us all now ? Well, despite the scheme being bought in it has been far from accepted by the rank and file. One indicator of this is that absence through sickness is currently running at an incredible 20%. (This has made a poor service even worse, with the result of a 137% rise in written complaints by passengers).

There is a lot of anger at the company's actions and the buying off of the unions means that the decades old buffer between them and us has disappeared Add to this the fact that the (relatively) high wages and comfortable conditions which made many people complacent have now gone for the majority of staff and there is a certain amount of new room for revolutionaries to exploit. The challenge is to focus this dissent more critically on the people who are the cause of it, the bosses, ideally by forming a new fighting workplace organisation which will look beyond the calming reformism of the unions.

There are three main obstacles to this. The first is the traditional hierarchy which exists among workers in the railway industry (drivers at the top, through guards and ticket office staff, to cleaners at he bottom - all in separate unions of course).

Any organisation will have to be formed by people who realise, as a start, that as our interests go beyond pay levels, they are the same for all workers in the company.

Secondly, attempts by the union to muscle their way back in must be resisted. This will not be too difficult. In discussions at work I usually have to wait my turn to slate them. However, the bosses, fearing the absence of a group of bureaucrats in place to contain rebellion, are busy setting up with them a talking shop called the 'Company Council'.

Thirdly, and most importantly, is the fact that a lot of people are angry but resigned to not being able to change things. Again the unions did a great job of hammering home to people that there were no other options other than the proposed deal. It is the task of all true revolutionaries to convince people that the power to change life for the better lies in their own hands.

Although the unions are dead and buried, the principle of union, of collective strength, is still very much alive. As one worker spat at a grovelling union rep "How exactly did the few people who own this line get so strong all of the sudden ? There are hundreds of us." The Independent newspaper (17/12/96) described the actions of the company's directors as "an example of unbridled corporate excess" and "an example of how to use the stock market to enrich yourself beyond the dreams of avarice". What they did not mention is what they cannot see. The seething discontent bubbling away beneath the surface which if used by people in a collective manner can really show the bosses, the union but most importantly all working class people what "the best that we can get" is.

aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Communist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

£1,000 press fund appeal

It is vital that we continue publishing Organise! and our bi-monthly agitational newsheet Resistance. To continue to do so, we need money, and lots of it! In short we need your money, dear readers.

We in the ACF will do all we can to raise funds to continue with our publishing ventures. But a little help from anarchists outside the ACF, who read our press, and all our other readers will help lighten the burden.

As we said in the last issue of Organise! we need a thousand pounds, a cool grand. Contributions to the Press Fund should be sent to Press Fund, ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley) London E1 7QX. Cheques, postal orders, IMOs payable to 'ACF'.

Donations so far. £12.65 (York); £2.50 (Pitlochry) ;£8.00 (Sheffield) ;£5.00 (Worcester); £5.00 (anon); £100 (Woking); Total is £133.15.

As you can see, we are a long way off of our target. Please think about us if you have a little money to spare (we know that's a tall order at the moment but still!) With the bombing of Serbia and Iraq and the gearing up of NATO and the US to a war footing, the rampant racism throughout society, the continuing despoiling of the environment, the scummy carryings-on of Labour it is all the more vital that a clear revolutionary anarchist voice is heard loud and clear. So give! give! give!

Margarita Ortega

***Organise!* begins a new series - *RevolutionaryPortraits.* This will be devoted to revolutionaries, some well known, some little known, who have contributed so much to our movement over the last 120 years.**

Margarita Ortega was a school teacher who came from a family "made up of people who were not politically conscious, but were proletarians aspiring to be bourgeois". During the unrest in Mexico in the early years of this century, she joined the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party). Despite its name, the PLM was openly anarchist communist in its views, and was very active among workers and peasants.

Margarita was an excellent horsewoman and crack shot. As Regeneracion, the paper of the PLM noted:" More than one time her daring and cold blood saved her from falling into the hands of the forces of tyranny. Margarita Ortega had a big heart on her horse, or from behind a boulder, she could keep the Government soldiers at bay, and a little later she could be seen caring for the wounded, feeding the convalescing or offering words of comfort to the widows and orphans".

In 1911 Margarita told the man she was living with: " I love you; but I also love those who suffer, and for them I fight and risk my life. I don't want to see more men and women giving their effort, their health, their intelligence, their future to make the bourgeoisie rich. I don't want there to be men who order around other men any more. I am determined to continue to fight for the cause of the Partido Liberal Mexicano, and if you are a man, come with me to the country; otherwise, you can forget me, because I am not going to be the companion of a coward". He refused to go with her, but her daughter Rosaura replied; "Let us saddle the horses and throw ourselves into the struggle for the redemption of the working class!"

Expelled

Because of their activities, Margarita and Rosaura were expelled from the border town of Mexicali, and marched out into the desert, with the command

Let us saddle the horses and throw ourselves into the struggle for the redemption of the working class.

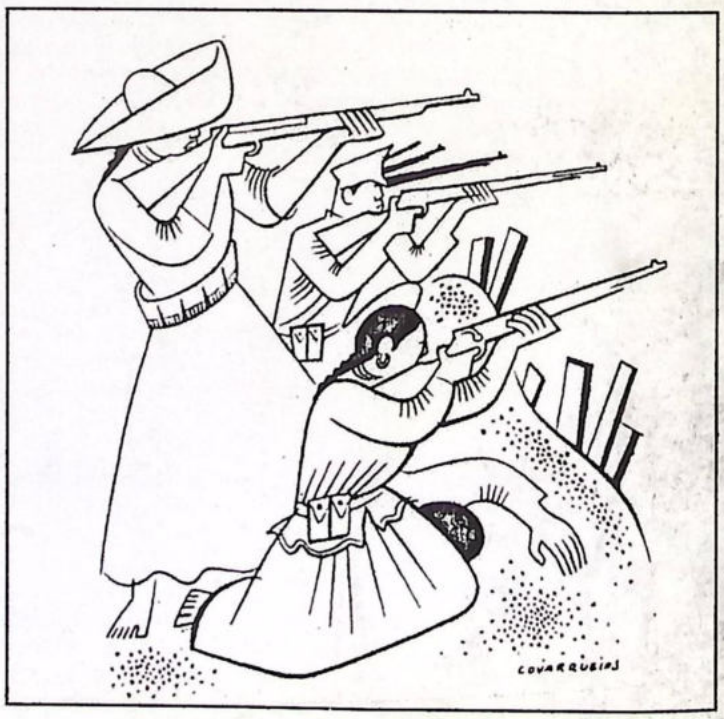
that they never return again... For several days they struggled under the blazing sun through the desert. At one point Margarita thought that her daughter had died, and was about to kill herself when she saw signs of life. The pair struggled on to Yuma in the United States, where Margarita was arrested by the immigration officials. She managed to escape from prison, and with Rosaura went to Phoenix, Arizona. Rosaura had been badly effected by her ordeals in the desert. She wished to return to Mexico to take part in the struggle rather than die on her sick bed but this was denied her by death.

With her comrade in struggle and love, Natividad Cortes, Margarita began to organise the anarchist movement in the northern Mexican state of Sonora, using the small town of Sonoyta as her base in October 1913. But she and Cortes were surrounded by government forces, and he was shot dead.

Margarita was imprisoned in Mexicali. She refused to name any other members of the PLM and as a result she was tortured. "Cowards!" she shouted, "Tear my skin to pieces, break my bones, drink all of my blood, and I will never denounce one of my friends".

She was forced to stand up in a cage. Any time she leant against the bars she was shoved back into the middle of the cage. If she fell on the ground, she was beaten till she was forced to stand again. After 4 days of suffering, she was taken out and shot at night.

" A shot left this noble woman without life, free; her existence and example to remind the dispossessed to redouble our efforts against exploitation and tyranny".



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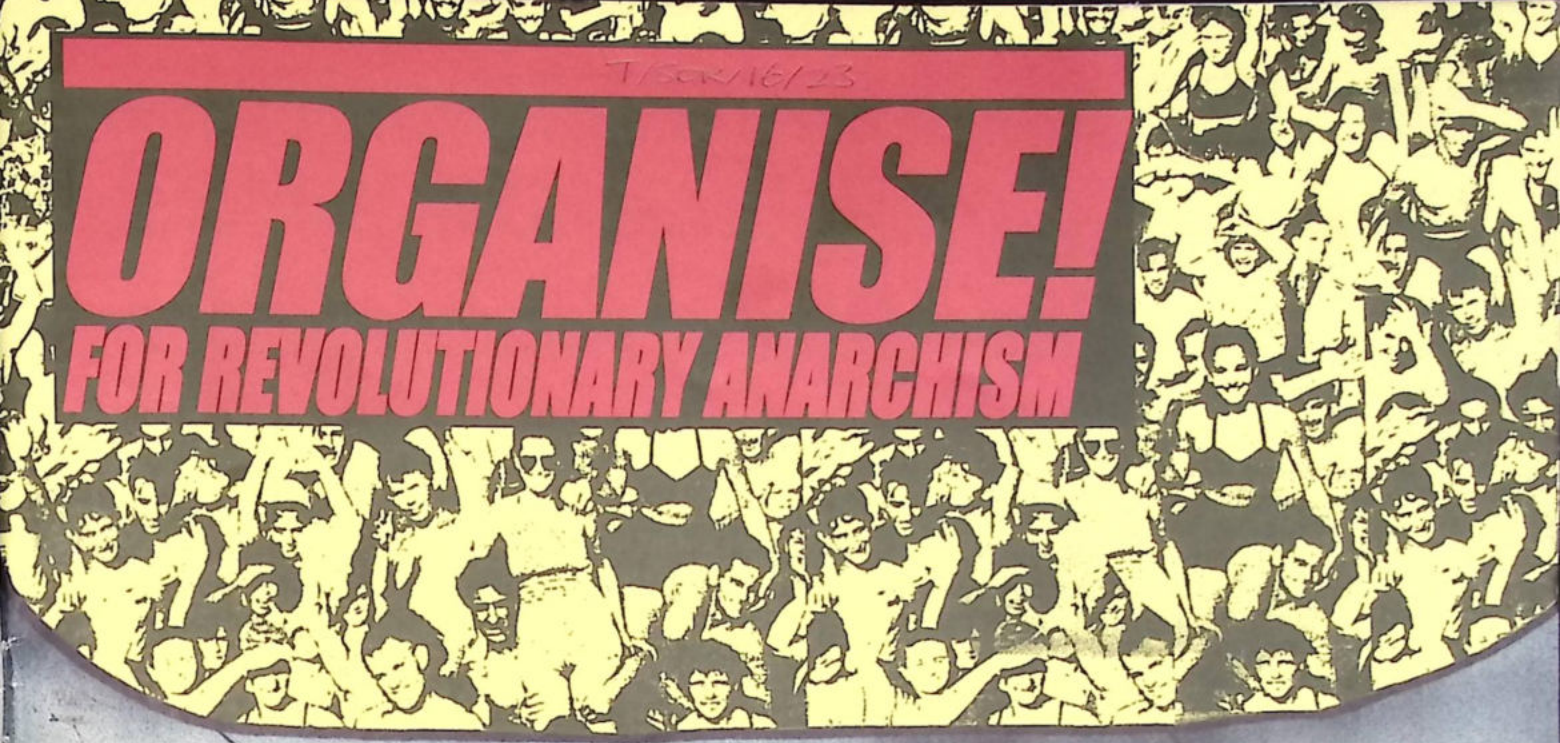

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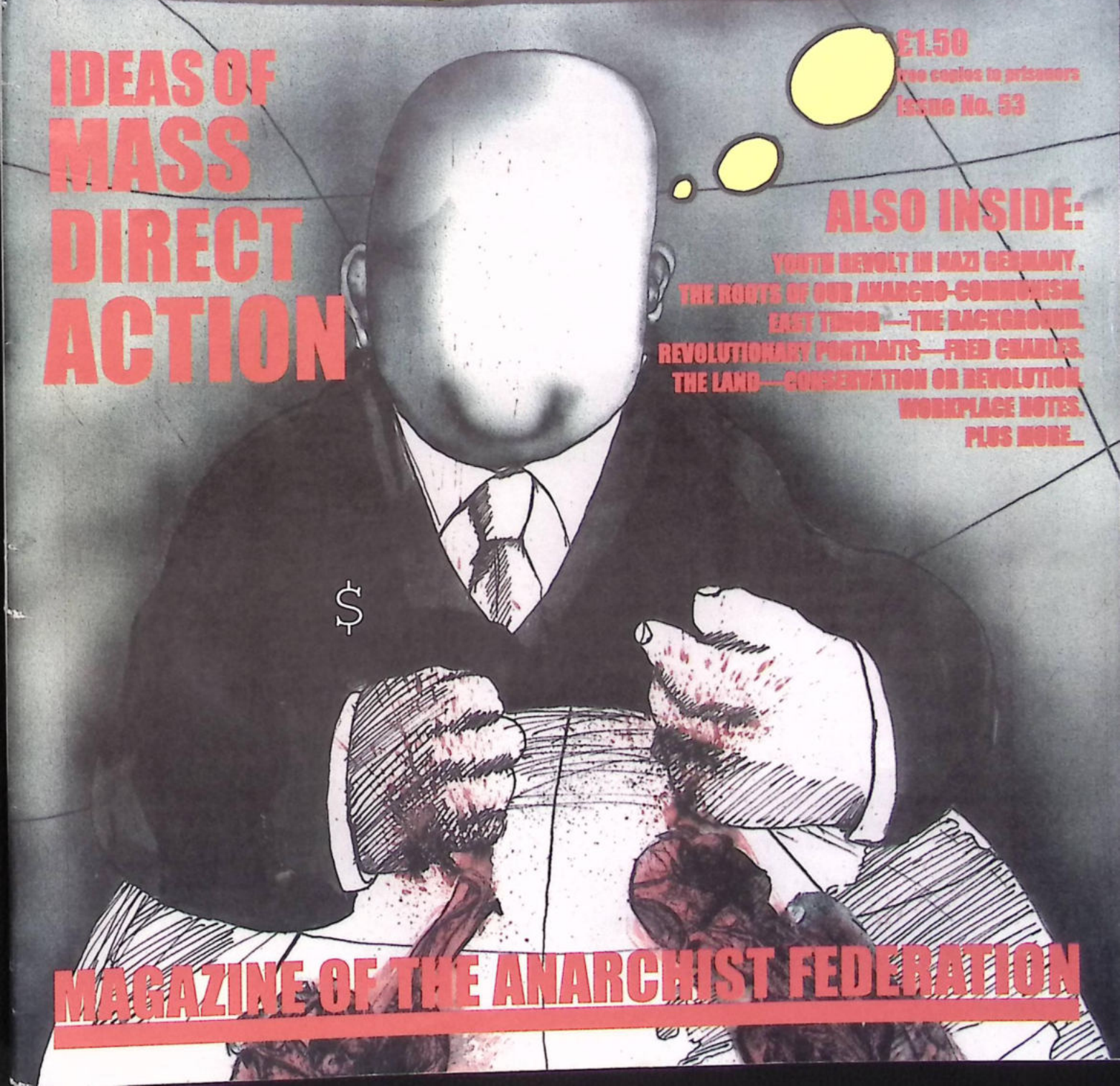

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

ORGANISE! IS THE magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is a twice-yearly theoretical journal published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to give a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues, and initiate debates on areas not normally covered by agitational journals. All articles in the magazine are by AF members unless signed. Some reflect AF policy and others open up debate in undiscussed areas, helping us to develop our ideas further.

Please feel welcome to contribute articles to *Organise!* as long as they don't conflict with our Aims and Principles we will publish them. (Letters, of course, need not agree with our A&Ps at all.) Deadlines for next issue are 14 October 2000 for features and reviews, and 21 October for letters.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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Wales/Cymru: PO Box 10, Cwmbran, Cymru, NP44 7YN.
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Anti-WTO actions — unified against capitalism?

Here we present two recent articles from the USA about the widely publicised demonstrations which took place in Seattle, Washington State, at the end of November 1999, against its hosting of the World Trade Organisation summit and nominally against globalisation of capitalism in general. These protests were the focus of events that took place around the world, known collectively as N30 in tribute to the earlier J18 international day of action (see last issue of* Organise!*). Both articles originate from Boston, Massachusetts, hundreds of miles away from Seattle on the East Coast, a fact which in itself helps to highlight the impact that N30 has had across America. The first, a thorough, evocative, but mostly uncritical account of the direct action and confrontations with the police was printed in* We Dare Be Free *newspaper (#6). Its editors are involved in important developments towards a North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) in the USA and Canada, including the hosting of its founding conference in April this year. The second is an article printed in the first issue of* The Bad Days Will End *— for council communism/libertarian socialism, and concentrates on a critique of the role and motivations of the labour unions. Read on, and after these articles we'll conclude with a few more words of our own.

The battle of Seattle: globalized capitalism and its discontents

FROM ALL REACHES of the globe, countless millions witnessed the dramatic televised broadcasts from the streets of Seattle. For many, the visual imagery that has since come to be associated with the historic meeting of the World Trade Organization has left a lasting impression – the massive protests; the brutal police repression; the burning barricades; the tear gas and rubber bullets; the attacks on corporate property; the riotous clashes; the mass arrests; and of course, the economically prosperous city of Seattle reduced to a declared state of civil emergency... at last the world can truly appreciate the social impact of global capitalism.

After months of organizing and mobilization, it was anyone's guess as to how the resistance to the World Trade Organization (WTO) would manifest itself in the streets of Seattle. When the WTO last met in Geneva over a year ago, the small Swiss city erupted into the worst rioting since 1932 – streets were blocked by spontaneous demonstrations, banks and multinationals were occupied, corporate property was destroyed, cars were overturned and torched, and overall damages were estimated to be in the millions. It seemed highly improbable that effective insurgency on this scale could be translated to a generally passive American left-protest movement – or could it?

In what turned out to be one of the most effective direct action campaigns of the last decade, the disruptive protests in Seattle have managed to give a new breath of radical militancy to a largely co-opted and irrelevant American left. In contrast to the traditionally safe forms of protest commonly used by left-activists (which rely heavily on appealing to the powers that be in order to grant reforms and concessions), the more defiant forms of protests that took place in Seattle demonstrated a new determination and willingness on the part of certain activists in working towards making this system increasingly more unmanageable for the capitalist ruling class.

Through many levels of complimentary direct action – which included non-violent civil disobedience, riotous clashes with police, militant street occupations, strategic corporate property destruction, and confrontational resistance – activists effectively shut down the WTO's opening ceremonies and first working sessions, took control of the streets of downtown Seattle for over twelve hours, were responsible in part for the total collapse of a new round of neo-liberal trade negotiations, and exposed for all the world to see that capitalist interests are no longer safe, even here, within the confines of the United States. Indeed, history had been made.

The road to Seattle

Late last winter, the Clinton administration announced to the world that Seattle had been chosen as the host city for the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was scheduled to take place from November 29th through December 3rd. From this publicly announced point of departure, a diverse international coalition of left activists and peoples' movements were quick to take up the task of mounting a successful campaign of opposition to this conference, which was expected to mark the starting point of a new round of negotiations (the so-called 'Millennium Round') aimed at expanding the powers of the WTO. For anarchists and other activists on the radical left, the opposition and resistance to the World Trade Organization was seen, not as a specific and isolated campaign within itself, but

instead as an integral part of the larger struggle against globalized capitalism as a whole. For this reason, the participation from anarchists in organizing against the WTO was significant from the very beginning.

In what was to become a pre-cursor to the global resistance aimed at the WTO, a successful 'international day of action against the global capitalist system' was organized for June 18th (J18) by a decentralized and informal network based around the People's Global Action (PGA). Timed to coincide with the first day of the 'Group of Eight' (G8) Summit held in Cologne, Germany, June 18th saw riots, street parties, direct actions, and creative protests take place in over 40 cities around the globe, with significant confrontations in London, Cologne, Nigeria, Pakistan, New York City, and Eugene, Oregon. From the success of J18, another international day of action was called for November 30th (N30), which was to coincide with the opening ceremonies of the WTO. A strategy of autonomous and decentralized action was adopted by the People's Global Action at the Group's second conference held in Karnataka, India, and this call to action went out to a number of international groups and movements.

In the weeks leading up to the WTO conference, this strategy of autonomous action was beginning to successfully take shape around the world. In late October, it was reported that a Seattle branch-outlet of The GAP (which has been a focus for anti-globalization and anti-sweat shop activism) was the target of a late-night firebombing attempt, where apparently two molotov cocktails were lobbed into the store but did not result in any serious damages.

On November 4th, a total of 11 activists from Northcoast Earth First! were arrested for hanging a banner that read: "Free Trade: Our World For Corporate Profits" from the roof of a building that was hosting an International Conference on Trade, Investment and Tourism in Eureka, CA. That same day, Canadian anti-free trade 'goblins' disrupted a negotiating meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Toronto, where stink bombs made from shit and rotting eggs were let off.

On November 15th, Dutch activists from the MayDay action group boarded and occupied a tourist replica of a ship that was owned by the 17th century Dutch East Indian Company (one of the first multinationals), which lies in the harbor of Amsterdam, and hung a giant banner between the masts which read: "Stop The WTO." In Geneva, 27 Swiss protesters managed to occupy the WTO's world headquarters on November 16th for over two hours before being ejected by police. On November 24th, over 300 people scaled the fence of the World Bank headquarters in India, covering it with posters, graffiti, cow shit and mud.

In Turkey, peasants, environmentalists, and trade unionists marched over 2,000 miles between November 22-29th against the WTO and global capitalism. Similar pre-N30 marches and demonstrations also took place in Korea, Czech Republic, Switzerland, France, India, Canada, and the United States.

From protest to resistance

Even before the WTO Ministerial Conference officially began, all hell started to break loose as thousands of activists made their way to Seattle days in advance. The Direct Action Network (DAN) had rented a large space in the Capitol Hill district which was to act as a center for anti-WTO activities throughout the week. In this space direct action strategies were planned, workshops and teach-ins were scheduled, affinity groups were formed, legal briefings were given, giant puppets were constructed, and people were trained in non-violent civil disobedience, street theatre, jail solidarity and first aid. A lot of this activity spilled over to a smaller space rented by the Seattle Anarchist Response (SAR), which acted as both an infoshop and meeting space, and the Indy Media Center, where most of the alternative media activism took place.

Within a relatively short time sporadic banner hangings became a commonplace occurrence in Seattle as activists repelled from highway overpasses, buildings, and giant cranes to unfurl bold messages of protest against the WTO. Throughout the city, scattered demonstrations and direct actions also increased dramatically in the days leading up to the WTO conference.

On November 26th, an underground group calling itself the 'Washington Tree Improvement Association' paid a visit to genetic engineering tree research facilities at the University of Washington's College of Urban Horticulture, where over 200 genetically modified trees and saplings were reported to have been destroyed, water lines and hoses were cut, and research materials were sabotaged. On November 27th, activists participated in a Critical Mass ride that managed to enter the Washington Trade and Convention Center en masse, with police frantically trying clear circling bicyclists from the downstairs foyer.

On Sunday, November 28th, the Direct Action Network (DAN) organized 'a rehearsal for insurrection', which consisted of a large and festive demonstration through the Capitol Hill neighborhood that managed to attract the participation of over 700 people. Later that night, between 50-75 people squatted a 12-unit apartment complex in protest of "a system in which human rights are subordinated to property rights" (after the WTO conference, squatters turned the building over to two homeless-advocacy groups who, through Seattle's Low Income Housing Institute, have attempted to broker a deal with the landlord). Also, 15,000 copies of the *Seattle Post-Intelligence* (a parody on the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, one of the city's largest dailies), with articles mocking the WTO, Monsanto, Boeing, privatization, and neo-liberal trade policies, were meticulously placed in newspaper dispensers all over the city.

By November 29th, activists started to engage in more directly confrontational forms of protest beginning with a demonstration in front of a McDonalds, where Jose Bove, a French goat farmer who has lead a campaign of direct action against the American fast food giant, spoke and shared with the public over 100lb of tariff-free Roquefort cheese that was illegally smuggled into the US. During the demonstration, groups of black-clad anarchists pushed through police lines and lay siege on the McDonalds, and after a few small skirmishes, were successful in smashing in the front windows and covering the exterior with spraypainted graffiti. Other protesters, who were carrying a banner against the genetic engineering of food, jumped on the roof of a city bus. From here, hundreds of protesters moved on to Niketown, where once again militants tried to engage in strategic acts of property destruction. Unfortunately, in what was to set the initial precedence for a week's worth of audacious and downright deplorable actions on the part of reactionary pacifists (who became popularly referred to as 'peace police'), groups of confused peaceniks began to physically defend Niketown, a corporation universally known for its use of sweatshop labor, from being trashed by the anarchists. Pacifism as pathology indeed!

N30: The day the WTO stood still

In the early morning hours of November 30th, thousands of activists had gathered

simultaneously at both the Victor Steinbrueck Park, near Seattle's waterfront Pike Place Market, and at the Seattle Central Community College, in the Capitol Hill district. In a staged procession, the motley assortment of activists began to march towards the Paramount Theatre, where the opening ceremonies of the WTO conference were set to take place. As hundreds of riot police attempted to prevent the two marches from reaching their perceived destination, participants broke off into large clusters of affinity groups and spread themselves throughout city, occupying every possible street, intersection, and point of entry leading to the Paramount Theatre, and surrounding almost all of the downtown hotels where delegates were staying. Downtown traffic became gridlocked, and hundreds of WTO delegates were successfully pushed back by activist blockades. By mid-morning, it was clear that the strategy of direct action was a complete success. Out of an expected 3,000 delegates, under 350 were able to make it to the Paramount Theatre, and as a result, the WTO officially cancelled its opening ceremonies.

Frustrated by a total loss of control over the situation, heavily equipped riot police (known as 'The Hard Team') began to mount a series of brutal offensives. Police indiscriminately shot canisters of tear gas and rubber bullets into crowds of demonstrators and used pain compliance holds, baton charges and pepper spray (at point blank range) on non-violent activist blockades. Responding accordingly to this violent provocation, groups of anarchists began to exchange volleys of tear gas canisters with police, and participated in a number of defensive scuffles. Whenever possible, small groups of protesters also began counter-offensives by throwing rocks, smoke bombs, and bottles at the lines of advancing riot cops. Make-shift barricades were formed out of overturned dumpsters, tree grates, and newspaper boxes. Police cars attempting to drive through human blockades were chased back, and in some instances, left completely immobile through the use of homemade caltrops. Unattended police cars, riot vans and delegates' limousines had their tires slashed, windows smashed, and when possible, were overturned by highly mobile groups of anarchist militants.

Rather than successfully regaining control over the streets, the police actions had completely the opposite effect as angered protesters became more confrontational in defending occupied intersections throughout the city. In addition to the unforeseen consequences of their aggressive actions, a huge strategic blunder was also committed by police as they left the entire downtown area unattended in order to secure positions between the Convention Center (where the WTO was scheduled to begin their first sessions of the afternoon) and the front lines of protest.

At 11:11am, a Reclaim The Streets! party was scheduled to take place in Westlake Center, the center of the city's newly liberated shopping district. Seizing the opportunity, between 60-80 masked anarchists grouped themselves into a highly organized 'black bloc' (an effective tactic adopted from the German autonome) and started on a politically-motivated rampage that spanned the entire downtown area. Using everything from sledge hammers and crowbars to slingshots and newspaper boxes, the black bloc systematically trashed a number of banks, multinationals, and big businesses. In choosing clear targets such as Bank of America, US Bancorp, Fidelity Investment, The Gap, McDonalds, Old Navy, Banana Republic, and Niketown, anarchists were successful in making a direct assault against some of the specific multi-national capitalist interests who stand to benefit most from institutions such as the WTO. Before long, huge stretches of windows were splintered into shards and buildings were covered with anarchist and anti-capitalist graffiti.

As the entire downtown area was transformed into a festive warzone of urban disorder, property destruction, clouds of tear gas, spontaneous street parties, and riotous clashes between protesters and police, the 50,000 strong labor march made its way through the city. Unfortunately, by and large, the rank-and-file of organized labor proved themselves unwilling to break from the timid and reformist union leadership of the AFL-CIO in order to stand with protesters against the violent police advancements. However, as the main labor march pushed on, an IWW contingent (marching under a banner which read "Capitalism Can Not Be Reformed!") pushed its way through the AFL marshalls and joined the blockades, This act of solidarity also managed to open the way for groups of rebellious steelworkers, electrical workers, longshoremen, sheet metal workers and teamsters who also joined with activists as they struggled to keep control of the streets.

In addition to the large AFL-sponsored labor march, a sizeable contingent from the Peoples Assembly, intiated by the Filipino group Bayan-USA, also marched into the scene. The Peoples Assembly had been meeting for two days with delegates from many different nations in order to expose imperialist globalization and develop solidarity between their various struggles. At the front of the march were Korean drummers, followed by contingents from the Philippines, Filipino communities throughout North America, and represenetatives

from Africa, Japan and Latin America.

By mid-afternoon, there were a number of tense stand-offs and running battles with police, who, in addition to tear gas and rubber bullets, began to employ the use of concussion grenades and large wooden and plastic bullets against crowds of people. In response, barricades were reinforced and a few overturned dumpsters were set aflame.

At around 4:30pm, black bloc anarchists managed to regroup in front of Niketown. After the windows were successfully smashed in, a number of local city youths entered the building and helped themselves to some of the overpriced merchandise. As with many of the other instances of direct action against corporate

property, groups of 'peace police' started to physically assault both black bloc anarchists and young looters. Forming a defensive circle around the battered Niketown, supposedly 'non-violent' activists shoved and tackled militants, and in some cases attempted to restrain people with the intent of turning them over to police, all in an effort to safe-guard the exploitive multinational from further destruction and expropriation. This was one of at least six different occasions where self described 'peacekeepers' attacked individuals engaging in direct action against corporate property throughout the day.

By early nightfall, a civil state of emergency was declared (for the first time in Seattle since World War II) and a curfew imposed. Police launched a massive tear-gas attack and series of violent charges against the remaining groups of demonstrators, forcing most people from the downtown area and up into the Capitol Hill district. As helicopter spotlights circled overhead, police fought pitched battles against hundreds of protesters and angry residents in what became some of the worst confrontations of the day. Volleys of tear-gas canisters were thrown back at advancing lines of police (who were also attacked with rocks and bottles), intersections were barricaded with burning dumpsters, and a local Starbucks was thoroughly gutted. The battle raged on late into the night.

Official reports claimed that 68 people had been arrested throughout the day, the number of injuries were estimated to be in the hundreds (most went unreported), and over $3 million in property damages had been sustained (with at least a further $10 million in lost Christmas shopping revenues throughout the week). By the week's end, Seattle's final costs for its handling of the WTO conference would exceed $9 million, far surpassing worst-case projections.

The Empire Strikes Back

With President Clinton arriving in Seattle on December 1st to address the WTO, city officials (under pressure from federal authorities) had extended the state of emergency, and the greater downtown area was declared a 'no-protest zone' for the remainder of the week. By early Wednesday morning, Seattle resembled a city under military occupation, with hundreds of National Guard troops ordered in by the governor, riot police and state troopers assigned to every corner, and armored vehicles making routine patrols throughout downtown. Thousands had gathered downtown in defiance of the no-protest zone, resulting in mass arrests by police. Protest organizers, medics, alternative media, and people with radio communications were all specifically targeted by police, while many others were placed under arrest for 'unlawful assembly', or else simply for possessing gas masks (which was declared illegal due to the civil emergency) or visible displays of protest such as signs, banners, stickers, or even buttons.

For the hundreds of arrested protesters, a special mass incarceration center was set up at the Sand Point Navy Base by police. Three busloads of arrestees managed to cut their plastic handcuffs with finger nail-clippers and refused to leave the buses in which they were transported in, resulting in a 14-hour occupation which came to an end only after police pepper sprayed and physically removed the occupants. There have been numerous reports of systematic police torture used against arrestees within both the Sand Point Navy Base and King County Jail. It has been reported that non-compliant individuals were beaten repeatedly, slammed against walls, overcrowded in cells, threatened at gunpoint, stripped naked, hog-tied and thrown into isolation, threatened with rape and torture, carried by their hair, and strapped into four-point restraint chairs where they were pepper sprayed and had pain-compliance techniques applied. Broken bones, concussions and other serious injuries were purposely left untreated and most people were denied access to legal representation. Despite this sadistic and brutal treatment by police, arrested protesters maintained a disciplined strategy of jail solidarity and engaged in numerous acts of resistance and non-compliance with legal proceedings.

Later in the afternoon, over a thousand people marched in solidarity with locked-out steelworkers to Pier 63 for a waterfront rally. After listening to numerous speeches, hundreds of restless protesters started chanting "Downtown! Downtown!" and marched en masse towards the convention center in defiance of the declared no-protest zone. In response, riot police and National Guard troops blocked all streets leading downtown. With street access to the convention center effectively cut off, protesters instead changed strategies and began to occupy key intersections in an effort to tie-up rush hour traffic. Without warning, a massive police offensive began as numerous police cars and armored personnel carriers began arriving on the scene and riot police and National Guard moved in. In a heavy-handed attempt to disperse this 'unlawful assembly', whole city blocks were completely engulfed by clouds of tear-gas, while police indiscriminately shot rubber and plastic bullets and dozens of concussion grenades into the crowds of demonstrators and by-standers. As people fled down alleyways and re-grouped in Pike Place Market, riot police and National Guard followed close behind. Once again the volley of tear gas and concussion grenades were thrown into crowds of people, this time in Seattle's historic open marketplace (and reportedly with a stronger gas that contained an apparent nerve agent responsible for a number of seizures, spontaneous menstruation and blackouts amongst protesters). From here most people retreated and made their way back up to the Capitol Hill district, touching off another night of fierce clashes with police. In total, it was reported that 510 people had been arrested on this day (with injuries assumed to be even greater than the previous day).

We won, you bastards!

Thursday morning began in front of Seattle Central Community College, where the Direct Action Network had scheduled a

public meeting and press conference to expose and denounce the brutal police actions used against activists and residents throughout the week. From here over 2,000 people marched throughout the city in protest of the continued police state in Seattle. Due to the widespread anger at the police brutality, the city backed off with some of their more overt police attacks, however the state of emergency and night curfew remained in place. In an effort to shift attention from their own brutal actions, authorities announced that they were conducting a city-wide manhunt for anarchists who may have participated in Tuesday's spree of property destruction, targeting anyone dressed in black with black masks. For the remainder of the demonstrations and marches, groups of identifiable anarchists were continually singled out and closely monitored by police and federal authorities.

By noon, the anti-police brutality march met up with an equally large march in support of independent farmers (and against biotechnology and monopoly agribusiness supported by the WTO) in Victor Steinbrueck Park, where the farmers' groups had scheduled an outdoor news conference and rally. From here, the farmers march continued on to protest in front of the Seattle headquarters of Cargill (a leading global agribusiness monopoly) and anti-police brutality demonstrators made their way to the King County Jail, where many arrested protesters were still being held. Hundreds of people surrounded the jail, mounting a 24-hour blockade in solidarity with the arrested. In response, a King County judge ruled that police had eight hours to allow for all of the arrested to have access to legal representation, have those held in solitary moved back into the general population, and provide adequate medical attention for people in need.

On Friday, a labor march with over 10,000 participants made their way through the downtown area to demonstrate against the no-protest zone and assert their right to free assembly. At about the same time, hundreds of people gathered in front of the Westin Hotel in support of a group of activists who managed to lock themselves to the hotel's entrance in an attempt to block WTO delegates from attending the final meeting of trade talks. Towards evening, when the curfew was set to take effect, groups of protesters occupied positions inside of the no-protest zone with dozens of riot police surrounding them.

Late into the night, hours after the WTO conference was officially scheduled to end, it was announced to the world that the WTO meetings had reached an impasse, trade talks had completely collapsed, and the conference ended in total confusion and disorder. With no agenda decided (Caribbean, Latin American and African delegations all refused their consent on grounds of the secretive and undemocratic nature of WTO process) and negotiations suspended, there will be no 'Millennium Round' of neo-liberal trade agreements put into motion within the WTO. As the final session adjourned, exausted WTO delegates stated that they would try again next year in Geneva to bridge the large differences within the organization.

After the week's trade conference fizzled to a close (with little to celebrate, the official closing ceremonies were cancelled), most delegates could not wait to leave Seattle. As they made their way through downtown, they were met one last time by activists who displayed a large signboard which read: "Bye WTO, It's Been A Riot!".

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Seattle: The US riot against 'Globalization'? by Loren Goldner

MASS POLITICS in the streets disappeared in the US between 1970 and 1973. In retrospect, it is clear that the years 1964 to 1970 were not a 'pre-revolutionary situation', but anyone who lived through those years as an activist can be forgiven for thinking it was. Any number of people in the ruling circles shared the same error of judgment. The black urban insurrections of 1964 to 1968, the working-class wildcat rebellion (often led by black workers) from 1966 to 1973, the breakdown of the US military in Indochina, the 'student' and 'youth' rebellions, and the appearance of militant feminist, gay and ecology movements were all indicators of a major social earthquake. Thirty years after they ended, the 'sixties', for the left and for the right, still hang over American society like smoke after a conflagration.

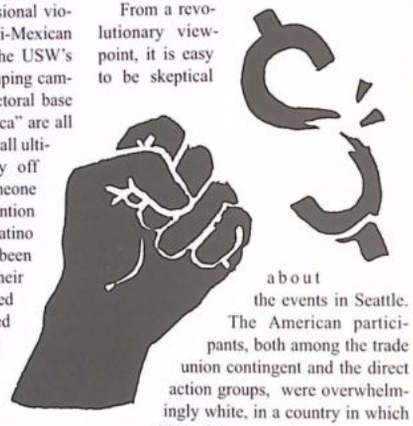
The 'oil crisis' and world recession of 1973-75 closed that era, and the revolutionary movement in the US and everywhere else has been retrenching and regrouping ever since. If the ebb has seemed deeper in the US than in Europe, it is only because US capital is the cutting edge of the dismantling of the old Keynesian 'social contract', such as it was, a dismantling in which Europe is still at the halfway point. The ebb of open struggle in the US, punctuated briefly but hardly reversed by actions against the Gulf War in 1990-91 or by the Los Angeles riots of 1992, expresses a vast 'recomposition' of class lines in a world restructuring of capital. Many formerly successful forms of struggle, most notably the wildcat strike, have all but disappeared. The movements of the sixties were internationalist in sentiment, but they rarely transcended the national framework in practice. However much one wants to quibble about the reality of 'globalization', it has been clear for a long time, even to avowed reformists, that any meaningful strategy, even in the day-to-day sense, has to be international, or better, 'transnational', from the outset to win anything worth talking about. "Think globally, act locally" may sound like a solution, but its practical result usually comes down to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

Some American and Chinese workers may have had a more radical consciousness, and perhaps were even more internationalist rhetorically, in the 1920s than today, but today conditions exist in which they are compelled, practically, to make internationalism concrete in a way that was unthinkable in the 1920s. Awareness of the need for a global strategy has been around, and widespread, for a long time, but it has been extremely difficult to make practical. The reformists at places such as the Institute for Policy Studies, supported by a few capitalists, are working hard to

develop something like a 'global Keynesianism' and a 'global welfare state', once they solve the little problem of the 'separate body of armed men', the sovereign nation state, which has not exactly disappeared. Meanwhile, the 'centrist' Clinton administration has since 1993 pushed through NAFTA, the WTO, the ASEAN agreement, and the dismantling of welfare, a set of attacks on working people in America that would have been opposed in the streets if undertaken by the 'right'. It has delivered everything the globalists have asked for.

American workers have reacted to this situation in contradictory ways. There has been an important protectionist sentiment among American workers for a long time: "Buy American", "Save American Jobs", "Park Your Toyota in Tokyo", support for anti-immigrant legislation, occasional violence against Asians, the vile anti-Mexican propaganda of the Teamsters, the USW's (United Steel Workers) anti-dumping campaign, or the working-class electoral base for Buchanan's "Fortress America" are all ugly examples of this. Beyond it all ultimately lies the sentiment: lay off someone else, or don't hire someone else, and save my job, not to mention a fair dose of anti-Asian, anti-Latino racism. Many workers have been won over to sympathy for their employers, who are beleaguered by imports, and have swallowed big concessions on that basis. On the other hand, traditional unions such as the UAW (United Auto Workers) as well as 'respectable' reformist opposition groups such as Labor Notes have made some serious attempts to hook up with workers (usually along industry lines) in Mexico, Asia and Europe, but strictly within a union and often corporatist framework. There have been some coordinated job actions in auto between the US and Mexico, or the Bridgestone-Firestone campaign of US and Japanese workers. But all these actions have been strictly under the control of some faction of union bureaucrats, in or out of power, and represent the extension of sectoral trade union reformism to a world scale.

There exists an inchoate desire in the US, including among some American workers, (which surfaced during the campaigns against NAFTA or 1995 'fast track' legislation), for a DIFFERENT KIND OF INTERNATIONALISM than that offered by either the globalist ruling class or by the timid actions of official unionists who unquestioningly accept the framework of capitalism. If, as seems to be the case, the world economy has become a 'negative sum game' for workers, a 'race to the bottom', then a 'different kind of internationalism' would mean creating a situation for a 'positive sum game' in which workers can concretely fight for their own interests on a CLASS FOR ITSELF basis, in a way that implicitly or, better still, explicitly, recognizes the practical unity of interests of working people in the US and China, Japan and Bangladesh, Italy and Albania. Since society, like nature, abhors a vacuum, without this kind of perspective, the protectionists and/or the anti-protectionist, internationalist reformists will rush in, and contribute to a new anti-working class reshuffling of the deck, in the capitalist "sum which can never be a totality", as Bordiga used to say.



From a revolutionary viewpoint, it is easy to be skeptical about the events in Seattle. The American participants, both among the trade union contingent and the direct action groups, were overwhelmingly white, in a country in which 30% of the population is now constituted by people of color. The slogan "Fair Trade, Not Free Trade" could certainly be seen as a slightly-concealed variant of protectionism by those (and there were many) who wished to do so. The dominant nerve of the demonstrators was activated by the very real prospect of little groups of transnational corporate appointees overruling and overturning national labor and environmental laws and agreements, but just behind that animus was, for some, the idea of Chinese bureaucrats having such influence. Steel workers threw foreign steel into Seattle harbor and others held a 'Seattle Tea Party' against foreign imports, with China the obvious main target. Few questioned as vociferously the negative impact of WTO entry on CHINESE workers, who obviously could not be present.

Throughout, the trade union bureaucracy remained firmly in control of the worker contingents, (determined, and successful, in their plan to have nothing but a peaceful, disciplined, unthreatening march independent of, if not indifferent to, the 'crazies' of the direct action groups), and few if any workers seriously challenged that control. The animus of the Sweeney leadership of the AFL-CIO clearly came from the sense of 'betrayal' at the recent US-China agreement on China's entry into the WTO. The failure of the Seattle meeting took the Democrats off the hook of having to push hard for China's entry into the WTO in an election year, when both the USW and the Teamsters have clearly gone for the protectionist option. Clinton's kind words for the rights of the demonstrators should be seen in that context, particularly after it became known that powerful forces at the top had pushed for heavy repression when the police lost control on the first day, and that US Army intelligence units disguised as demonstrators had been all over the place with concealed lapel cameras and all the new paraphernalia of the technotronic, 'New Paradigm' surveillance state. In the Boston area, where I live, much of the 'post-Seattle' organizing has an even more overtly protectionist agenda, with repugnant slogans such as "Not One More American Job to Mexico", and I doubt that this is exceptional.

Nevertheless, despite all the elements of 'uneven', parochial or simply reactionary ('Buchananite') consciousness it may have contained, one has to characterize Seattle as a breakthrough. There was, in the patent lack of official preparedness for what happened, an unrepeatable singularity (no international trade summit will ever again take place, anywhere, with so little readiness for heavy repression) an opening to exactly that element of the unknown and unexpected that characterizes a situation momentarily beyond all manipulative control, whether by the state or the unions or the 'left', when power lies for a moment 'in the streets'. In 24 hours, Seattle ripped away the 'one note' unanimity of the tolerated 'public discussion' of international economic issues of the past 20 years or more. Millions of people who never heard of the WTO learned what it was, and what it does, more thoroughly than through decades of peaceful opposition and think-tank chatter. Even strongly protectionist American workers were thrown together in the streets with activists, including worker activists, from 100 countries, and had to confront the human face of the producers of 'foreign imports' in a way that had never previously occurred on such a scale, not to mention in such an open situation (as opposed to tedious international trade union conferences of bureaucratic delegations). Teamsters, bare-breasted Amazon lesbian warriors and tree-huggers were thrown together, and talked, on an unprecedented (for the US) scale. The Seattle events gave a concrete target to opponents of the seemingly abstract forces that have made serious action on the appropriate level so difficult for so long. In accounts I heard from people who had been there, and in material I was able to gather, there was a genuine whiff of the spontaneous awakening, in the heat of confrontation, to the power of capital and the state that has not been seen in the US since the sixties, a genuine demonstration by masses in motion of the truth of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, to wit that classical materialism "does not understand sensuous activity as objective". The great majority of demonstrators in Seattle, particularly in the direct action contingents, had not been born or were children when the sixties ended, and had never experienced their own power in the streets in this way, anywhere. Trite as it may sound to the small numbers of sixties activists who still consider themselves revolutionaries, and who are jaded from having been through it all before, a first clubbing, a first tear-gassing, seeing the police go berserk against people detained in a holding cell, a first concrete experience of what bourgeois 'rights' really mean when the state tears them up in a confrontational setting, is an irreversible crossing of a threshold, an irreplaceable experience of collective power and of the role of those who job is to repress it. People who go through this, whatever the consciousness or intentions that brought them to Seattle, can never be the same.

The brief, ephemeral opening of the sense that 'nothing will ever be the same' experienced by some in Seattle and in the wake of Seattle will close again quickly (just as the opening, such as it was, of the LA riots, or that of the December 1995 strike wave in France, closed quickly) without a strategy for a real internationalism, an internationalism in which criticisms of slave labor in China or child labor in India are joined to, eg a practical critique of the mushroom-like proliferation of sweatshops and prison labor in the USA perspective encompassing the most oppressed layers of the working class and its allies is always a safeguard against the parochialism, including militant parochialism, which sets the stage for a 'reformist' reshuffling of the capitalist deck, as occurred in the 1930s and 1940s. Ever since '1973' closed the era of meaningful 'wildcat' direct action on the shop floor of one factory, the workers' movement in the US and many other countries has been groping toward a new concrete terrain on which to fight something beside endless losing local battles against plant closings and downsizing, or outright reactionary battles demanding in effect that the layoffs happen 'somewhere else'. In their greatly heightened global mobility, the capitalists stole a march on the world working class that more than 25 years of losing and defensive struggles has not yet overcome. If Seattle is in fact to be a positive turning point, at which history did in fact finally turn, it can only be on the path to solidifying and greatly expanding this terrain.

The Bad Days Will End (four-issue sub. $5, $10 outside of US) is available from: Merrymount Publications, P.O. Box 441597, West Somerville, MA, 02144. Email: bronterre@earthlink.com

Conclusions by the AF

THE FIRST ARTICLE does an important job in defending direct action against police and property at N30. Its author and numerous other anarchist communists, notably those around the NEFAC initiative, are united in support of members of the 'anarchist black bloc' who are facing serious charges, and who are being scapegoated by some liberal elements. However, it seems clear that many of the other so-called anti-capitalists at Seattle do not have a class struggle, anti-state agenda. One problem with an uncritical attitude to 'people's global this and that' is exactly its acceptance of cross-class unity in struggle, which has to be opposed if we are to recognise the true nature of capitalism, being based as it is on class privilege and ownership. A class analysis also puts direct action into context. It defends actions against the police and property but it can also be used to criticise autonomous actions if they become too divorced from the experiences of other working class people – as a guard against a tendency towards elitism, and ultimately terrorism. The blank acceptance of the firebombing incident is worrying in this respect. On the other hand, can anarchist communists really talk positively about breathing a new militancy into the left? Maybe we use the word 'left' differently in Britain compared to the USA, but anarchists really do need to be careful about identifying with non-libertarians. Since J18 and N30, the Socialist Workers' Party here in Britain is trying to benefit by jumping on the anti-capitalism bandwagon (being careful not to mention the word anarchist of course), and promoting the party's leadership as the way forward. Quite probably this will fall on deaf ears, and we won't have to work too hard to stop them getting their democratic-centralist clutches into those who are unaware of their kind of politics, but any talk of the left in a positive light can only help them confuse our huge differences in objectives. On the contrary we should be pleased if they remained weak.

It is perhaps easier to criticise from outside, but the author of the second article doesn't hide this fact. With a more detached analysis they do well to show how so-called anti-capitalist unity can be read in different ways, not least as the veiled (and not so veiled) protectionism of the unions and the Fair Trade lobby. So, whilst is it good to know that some in the worker contingents have openly supported the direct actions of N30 and have not been taken in by liberal pacifist condemnations, we find is it equally important to recognise the lack of a break from conventional leftist organisation. It is always most valuable when workers learn from struggling outside of their unions, and it is not clear to what extent this happened at Seattle, if at all. We must hope that workers involved in N30 will recognise how unions will defend jobs 'at home' in the guise of penalising companies with poor workers rights abroad (with the support of the US President, no less), which is against any true internationalism. This would be on the way to an understanding of why a national or state economy is not a benign alternative to the seemingly more anti-state 'globalised' variety, and that we need to fight instead for the real alternative of an anti-state communism – anarchist communism.

Debacle in Timor

AFTER 24 YEARS the world's media finally discovered East Timor. The first glimpses they provided were those ten-minute, end of broadcast time fillers, showing us how the UN was bringing democracy to yet another uncivilised corner of the world. Then, as the situation disintegrated, 'our' fearless journalists fled to watch events from the cosy safety of the aggressor's lair, and danced to a merry tune fiddled by the impartial western governments. In the end they just got bored and left for their next news-byte; Timor forgotten once more!

It's easy to be cynical about Timor; it really is. But what of the lessons that can be drawn? And what now for the people of East Timor?

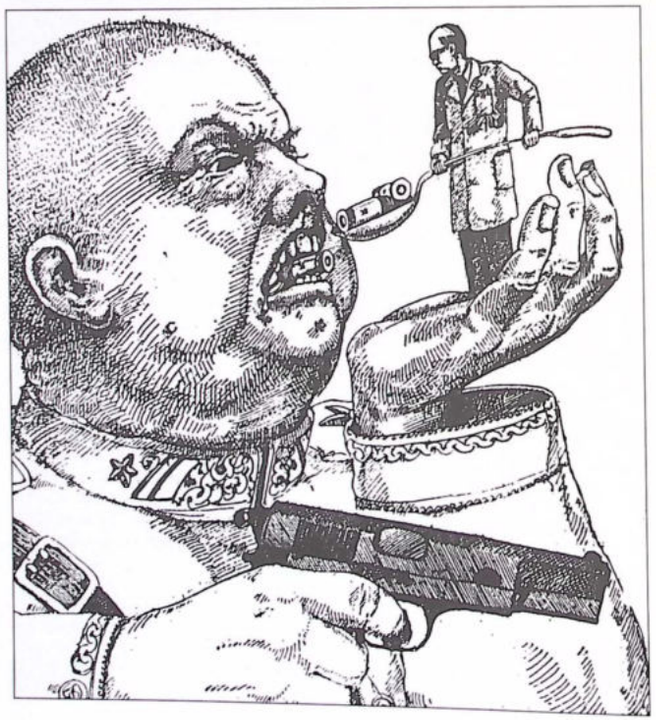
The vote

August 30th was billed as the day East Timor got to vote on its freedom, no less. Well, not quite. Actually the referendum was to decide whether East Timor would become an autonomous region of Indonesia. A 'no' vote was regarded as signalling a demand for independence.

However, this still had to be ratified by Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), effectively meaning that in the end the Indonesian government got to decide on East Timor's independence. In two weeks of TV coverage in Britain this 'minor' fact was completely overlooked (coincidentally it took 'our' illustrious journalists nearly this length of time to pronounce the Timorese leader's name correctly! Most never figured it out).

In these long reports prior to the referendum, minor mention was made of the spectre of the militias. Yet to the people of Timor they were already well known; the violence was well underway. So how come the UN didn't foresee the coming events?

President Habibie announced in the January that there was to be a referendum on the future of East Timor. It seems that this was a sop to the international community to prove the government's democratic credentials in the wake of the fall of Suharto. Allied to this, following the 1997 Asian economic meltdown – brought on in no small part by Western currency speculation – Indonesian capitalists were desperate for Western finance to prop up their battered economy (an irony that should not be passed over!). Timor was an easy response, having been just about kept on the agenda by a small number of dedicated people around the world, and most importantly by the sheer tenacity of the Timorese themselves never to give up their struggle.



It is unlikely that anyone within the Indonesian government seriously thought East Timor would be lost, and, just to make sure, steps were taken to ensure that results would be favourable. As the referendum was announced the military set up the militias across the 13 districts (Kabupaten). They were trained in West Timor by groups 4 and 5 of Kopassus – Indonesia's elite forces, who have received training from KST (Dutch), SAS (UK), Green Berets (USA), GSG-9 (Germany), amongst others. They were 11,000 strong drawn almost exclusively from outside of Timor (another favourite government tactic), including criminal gangs released from prisons across the archipelago specifically for the job.

That same January, Operasi Sapu Jagad-I (Operation Universal Sweep) was commenced by the military. This was intended to target the leaders of the CNRT – the umbrella organisation of pro-independence groups, and other notable figures with a campaign of violence and intimidation aimed at frightening the populace into accepting autonomy. The military figured that months of violence would intimidate people sufficiently to deter them from registering and voting. It would show the world that the referendum was unnecessary and that the people supported autonomy. Clearly, after 24 years of occupation, the military hadn't learnt much about their adversaries.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) arrived in the East Timorese capital, Dili, in May to oversee the referendum. UNAMET had 270 civilian police, unarmed and serving no real purpose. The UN meekly put security for the referendum in the hands of the

Indonesian security forces. A less impartial force would have been impossible to find.

Since the referendum there has been much finger pointing as to who was to blame for the disastrous occurrences; yet the question is not how the referendum was run, but why? It may have escaped the notice of the UN but East Timor was invaded! How can they possibly justify subjecting a population to further torment for the sake of a vote? Is this their idea of international law? Clearly it is, since they are repeating exactly the same farce in a number of other territories around the world – Western Sahara is just one example. Apparently, what democracy equates to is that powerful countries can freely invade weaker neighbours, put their lands to the torch, their people to the sword, asset strip the place, and then decades down the line the UN will turn up to ask what's left of the population if they're happy with the situation, while their would be killers poke the barrel of a gun in their face!

Of course, the world media never asked the question; too busy sipping cocktails with the generals in Jakarta no doubt. Politicians around the world were quietly complicit in this too, you might even think that they had something to hide. Well, no surprises, of course they do.

Invasion and resistance

Following the overthrow of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974, by the MFA (Movement of the Armed Forces), the leftist government pulled their bankrupt nation out of their colonies. The revolution had been given much impetus by the colonial wars they were fighting in their African colonies. Marxist governments were established in Angola (MPLA), Mozambique (FRELIMO), Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) as they declared independence.

In East Timor too, independence was granted, though without the same enthusiasm. There was hardly any governing infrastructure, and nobody to do the governing. The Portuguese were asked to stay on until a stable government could be established. FRETILIN, the Timorese independence front, was only founded in 1974. It naturally sought contact with the other Portuguese speaking independence movements, for help and solidarity. To give them any sort of ideology is probably to overstate the case. However, they'd now committed the ultimate heresy.

December 7, 1975, a lone radio message was broadcast: "The soldiers are killing indiscriminately. Women and children are being shot in the streets. This is an appeal for international help. This is an SOS… Please help us." Not only did nobody help, but unbeknown to the Timorese the invasion had been delayed by two days to allow US president Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger to fly the hell out of Jakarta where they'd been rubber-stamping the invasion, so as to avoid appearing complicit. As if?? What they clearly didn't realise is that shit sticks… and it stinks too!

The mighty UsofA was seemingly so shit scared of 600,000 mostly peasants, and the potential of them becoming a bastion of Marxism, that it wanted them obliterated; and in the wake of their somewhat disappointing performance in Vietnam they didn't want the blood on their hands.

In the ensuing bloodbath tens of thousands were butchered as the country was put to the torch. As a result, 1976 saw the formation of FALINTIL to wage guerrilla warfare against the invaders. Portugal had protested the invasion, as the democratic countries of the world buried their heads in the sand, but they had been powerless to do anything – except watch. The guerrilla war was waged with surprising success considering FALINTIL's total lack of resources or experience. Nobody was more surprised than the Indonesian government and military! In 1992, their leader and figurehead Jose 'Xanana' Gusmao was captured and jailed.

By 1994 reports were suggesting that at least 200,000 had been killed, a third of the population! Proportionally, this exceeds every notable mass murderer of the 20th century, yet Suharto has never been committed to that hall of infamy. The UN has become very fond of using the word 'genocide' mostly for effect rather than accuracy, yet here surely is a clear-cut case of attempted genocide. According to them, apparently not. But what else is causing deliberate starvation to an entire people? KOPASSUS maintained a no-prisoner policy: capture them, torture them, and kill them. Gusmao was lucky, even the generals weren't stupid enough to kill him for fear of finally pricking the democrats' consciences around the world. Many of his operatives were not so lucky.

International complicity

Western capital sees Indonesia as a prize. It's the fourth most populous nation with 200 million people, 115 million of which are on Java. From the birth of the republic, which in reality is little more than a Javanese empire, it pursued aggressive land grabbing. President Sukarno, who wound up a crazed megalomaniac, was ultimately doomed for committing the cardinal sin of consorting with the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party; then one of the world's largest), in his quest for power. During the Konfrontasi, Britain and other Commonwealth countries had to send troops in to the jungles of Borneo to prevent him from seizing the entire island. Sarawak and Sabah had opted to join the new Malaysian federation, while Brunei had opted for independence. Indonesia also landed troops in Peninsular Malaysia, and even Singapore.

Sukarno was unreliable, so the western powers welcomed the arrival of Suharto and the New Order, as he was avowedly anti-Soviet. Following his success in an orchestrated move in 1965, which saw a number of Suharto's rivals killed, the PKI was banned. And then it was eliminated, the party machinery taking advantage of muslim groups to carry out the slaughter. In the carnage that followed, the government claimed 160,000 dead as "a fair figure". Most other observers start the bidding at 500,000, and many claim well in excess of a million. Sumatra, the island with the reputation for being the most left-leaning and rebellious (it is also, in terms of population the only island that can mount any kind of challenge to Javanese domination) suffered particularly badly. It wasn't only the PKI who were exterminated; it was union members, political activists, and no small number who died merely as a result of opportunities being taken to settle old disputes and vendettas.

What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the article and noone else.

In this issue we have published two articles from North America on Seattle with editorial comment. *Organise!* is not a rigid 'party-line' magazine and we hope we can use *Organise!* as a forum for the revolutionary anarchist/libertarian movement in general. Please submit any articles, reviews, letters etc to us at the London address.

In 1969 Suharto did a dirty deal with the Dutch government while the world's governments again went sand-digging with their faces, and annexed West Papua, which became the 26th province – Irian Jaya. Interestingly the UN pops up here. Despite years of Indonesian infiltration the population showed no interest in becoming part of their republic, so having done the deal, up pops the UN with the required sop that the Papuans should decide upon independence – or Indonesian province – by the end of 1969. The 'Act of Free Choice' took place in July, supervised by the UN. This amounted to Indonesia announcing that the elders of the three most populous districts had unanimously decided to become a part of Indonesia. The abandonment of the West Papuans is yet another sad and disgusting story, still being played out.

Western capital has poured into Indonesia. Companies such as Nike and Adidas have set up huge sweatshops paying workers (many of whom are children) a pittance to work in appalling conditions for long hours, with no rights, no worker organisation tolerated, so they can glean even higher profits from their over-priced rubbish in the world's rich countries. Land has been denuded, as forests have been clear-cut for profit; Kalimantan, it is claimed, now has no untouched primary forest! The large smoke clouds, which choked much of South-East Asia in 1997, in the process devastating Malaysia's tourist industry, were largely caused by forest burning in Indonesia. The arms trade to Indonesia has been well documented. Britain is their biggest supplier. It has provided training, weapons, instruments of torture and crowd suppression equipment. They are not alone.

In 1994, in opposition, Robin Cook stated that Hawk aircraft had been "observed on bombing runs in East Timor in most years since 1984". Once in government he denied having ever said such a thing (ever heard of *Hansard* you fuckwit!), and that Hawks were not operational in East Timor.

So, as we can see international complicity in the whole dirty business of East Timor and Indonesian politics is nothing new. In fact, quite often they have been doing nothing more than supporting Western hegemony. Politicians in the developed world have absolutely no grounds for adopting their positions of moral superiority, which they relish so much. The UN-backed referendum was a chance seemingly for everyone to come out smelling of roses, particularly for those who understood absolutely nothing about what has taken place in East Timor for the past 24 years.

Indonesian revenge

Operasi Sapu Jagad-I was a resounding failure. The people of East Timor had spent 24 years suffering Indonesian state violence – what difference was one more year going to make? Of a near-total turnout, 78.5% voted 'NO' (not yes, media please note!), in an unprecedented show of faith in the UN, who had promised protection. It was a show of faith they surely didn't deserve. Of course, when people have their backs to the wall they'll cling to anything, and the UN are notorious for talking big, so it's maybe not so surprising. It was just another example in a long line of acts of mass defiance.

The very fact that the military had launched a wave of intimidation clearly illustrated that they didn't want the referendum to go ahead – probably reason enough for most East Timorese to therefore support it. The media played heavily on this image of the UN as the benevolent bringer of democracy, and the Timorese as the grateful recipients. Possibly closer to the truth is that most expected little or nothing from the UN (after all they'd done absolutely nothing for the previous 24 years), but saw the vote as an act of resistance to Indonesian rule.

And then all hell broke loose!

Even before the votes were counted it must have been obvious to the military that they'd made a monumental error of judgement. They'd utterly failed to intimidate people from voting and knew full well they'd be demolished in the count. Operasi Sapu Jagad-II was thus initiated. This was also pre-planned, and involved around 15,000 troops and militia. Six battalions of TNI (Indonesian army) were involved including the notorious 744 and 745, along with para-militaries. They sought to create the impression of an outpouring of anger by local pro-Indonesian people, but the violence was clearly well-orchestrated. People were forced to burn their own villages, and the Catholic church came in for particular attention as it is seen as being pro-independence. There was a clear intention to do as much damage as possible; to punish this resistance by utterly wiping out all infrastructure.

The result of the vote was announced on September 4th. How many died in the ensuing madness is anyone's guess. The military made sure attention was initially focused on UN personnel and journalists, ensuring that they soon fled for their lives, also thus ensuring that there were no outside witnesses. It may be easy to sympathise with their overriding sense of self-preservation, after all journalists had been killed in Timor before. However, these were the very people who had promised to stand by the people so they could make a free choice, who had guaranteed their safety, pledged they were not going anywhere. And yet, when they were called on to honour that pledge, they fled. It was Rwanda all over again, as the UN turned tail and ran! With friends like these, don't expect a long life! Even some UN staff were describing the UN's decision as "gutless" and "disgraceful".

It was soon clear that General Wiranto had lost control of his forces in East Timor; and with the UN standing in the sidelines looking a complete joke, the major powers needed a response to restore the faith. So it was that Indonesia reluctantly agreed to a limited 'peace-keeping force' led by Australia (who have ambitions of a role in the Asia-Pacific region not unlike the USA's world-policeman role). This force was barely able to secure Dili, let alone anywhere else, so the violence continued. It was a token gesture; the island had already been put to the torch. Over 220,000 people had been forcibly marched into West Timor – fleeing the fighting according to Indonesia.

It was also part of the strategy to provoke FALINTIL into fighting back, so it could be viewed as a civil war, which would no doubt have changed the perspective of the international powers. This was also how the Indonesian media was selling the events to the public across the archipelago, and to anyone else who would swallow it. As a result, September 7th saw the imposition of martial law.

The East Timorese had no doubt already had quite enough of that!

When the UN returned, it was amazingly still full of bluster, proclaiming that the perpetrators of atrocities would be brought to justice. However, in reality, the forensic teams (who were so conspicuous in the Balkans) didn't arrive for weeks, allowing any evidence to be disposed of. It was claimed that the military dumped many bodies out at sea, many others were incinerated in buildings. The Indonesian government meanwhile set up their own human rights investigation. It turned up a bit of incriminating evidence, such as a mass grave containing 25 bodies in West Timor (*The Independent* reported this from Kuala Lumpur as "one of the worst atrocities of the violence in East Timor"!). No doubt they will scapegoat a few minions along the way to be seen to be doing something. In fact, the new government of President Abdurrahman Wahid, and Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri (democrat's favourite and daughter of Sukarno) have initiated a human rights court for Indonesia. It offers the military the chance of effectively trying their own, and will of course only be effective from the time it comes into effect, so all past abuses are in effect forgiven.

Democracy and law

This is the two-pronged assault of global law. First we have the UN running around playing policeman and bringer of democracy, and on the other hand we have the spectre of the increasing power of international law courts to punish those they see fit to. Many people support this idea, sickened by the mass slaughter of the 20th Century. But it rarely brings justice; it won't bring justice to East Timor; and it won't change anything in the future. Consider Rwanda, where international war crimes tribunals were set up under the auspices of the UN following the enormous slaughter, which they'd previously run away from. Ordinary soldiers (of the losing side, of course) were herded into prison camps, where they were slowly tried by a judiciary made up of locals (from the winning side) with no training or experience, little funding, and an inability to check alibis properly. No doubt some are guilty and some are not; many are executed or imprisoned, innocence seems to be not an option. sBy contrast political leaders are being tried by international judges from the likes of Europe and the USA (paid for by the UN), provided with teams of lawyers (again paid for and sent from the West); no shortcuts are taken in amassing evidence, and guess what? They're getting off in droves! One trial in which a number of people were accused of ordering the execution of an estimated 10,000+ in a football stadium, of which there was absolutely no doubt of their guilt, got off on a legal technicality. It seems that the UN certainly is exporting Democracy and Justice to these countries after all!!!

The future

Of the 220,000 marched into West Timor, the UN was charged with repatriating them to East Timor. While they continued to bumble around, the militias and military ran the camps. People were tortured, murdered and raped. Many people were apparently trans-located to other parts of Indonesia as a final act of spite. Whether the UN will ever manage to locate these people must be considered extremely doubtful. Whether they will even try is not certain. It has been alleged that children have been shipped back to Jakarta to work in prostitution, a notion that should be taken seriously. It is well known that the officer class in the Indonesian army has deep connections with organised crime, to a point where one doesn't happen without the other. It is often claimed that this is their major source of income. This outrage has passed without comment from the UN, the world powers, or the media.

For those in East Timor, the possibility of starvation is a real prospect if destroyed foodstuffs, including seed, are not replaced quickly. If this is not done, along with the repairing of infrastructure, then the spectre of disease won't be long in rearing its head either.

East Timor is in big trouble even if it can hold on to this status without Indonesia returning. Its infrastructure is devastated and someone will have to foot the bill. No doubt the international financiers will be bearing down on them to ensure their compliance to international capital, saddling them with a nice fat debt right from the outset. Indonesia could still make life very difficult for them. For example, East Timor's most obvious source of wealth is oil in the Timor Sea, but Indonesia and Australia have already carved that up for themselves. It is unlikely they'll get much support from the world powers in pursuit of this.

East Timor has given us a taste of capitalism's idea of liberal democracy. Voting as an ideal is placed above everything, particularly justice. The UN, as some benevolent, neutral force for good, is clearly a thinly-veiled lie concealing its role as yet another stick which the major powers, and primarily the USA, use to beat recalcitrants who won't rollover and allow themselves to be exploited by capital as is seen fit. The now fast developing international law supposed to bring justice to all merely protects the injustices of the ruling classes. The media, that bastion of freedom, who like to tell us that we should lay down our lives to defend their freedoms, were ill-informed, inaccurate, pandering to authority, and downright gutless. After all, isn't it much more important to chase around minor celebrities and catch them in compromising positions? Yep, I'd die for that. Wouldn't you?

East Timor raises questions for anarchists too, despite the fact that it highlights many of our core arguments. How can we make solidarity more affective? "Start your own revolution" is all very well, but in reality has often meant doing nothing.

East Timor was not a national liberation struggle; it was a brutal fight for survival. What choice did the Timorese have? Of course, it became a national liberation struggle, but in the end was there any other alternative? They were annihilated merely for consorting with Marxists who they happened to share a common language with; imagine what would have happened to them if they'd declared an intention to conform to the principles of libertarian communism!

Welcome to the Free World!!

Resistance!

THE AF HAS now produced 13 issues of our agitational *Resistance*, moving from a bimonthly schedule to a regular monthly appearance.

Resistance has appeared at an important time. Our widespread distribution of our agitational bulletin means more and more people are coming in contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when there is growing disgust at the Labour Party, and the Stalinist and Trotskyist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of *Resistance* send POs, cheques for £4 payable to 'AF' to AF , PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2XL.Better still take bundles of *Resistance* to distribute in your area.

CONSERVATION:

Anti-people or anti-capitalist?

We continue our series on the land.

HUMAN BEINGS HAVE been responsible for transforming their environment to such a degree, that no part of the planet, nor indeed the atmosphere, can be said to be unaltered by our species. Humans' particular abilities to conceptualise, analyse and then act on their surroundings have given the impression that they stand outside, and above, the natural environment. This tendency has been reinforced as the majority now live in urban areas with 'nature' something to go and visit.

However, we are now beginning to realise that humans do not have unlimited power. In fact, nature has as much, if not more, power. This can be seen in several ways. Firstly, we are beginning to realise our whole survival as a species depends on the environment. We cannot do whatever we want without repercussions. The list of unforeseen consequences of our actions is growing: the ozone layer, global warming, pollution of land, air and water, the impact on the food chain and health, the increase in uncontrollable viruses. We think we have 'subdued' nature, only to find it has other ways of resisting our domination.

Secondly, despite the development of chemical products in laboratories, GM foods, synthetic clothes etc, it is still the land and its resources that form the basis of everything. Without the land, the rest of the human-made edifice we have constructed on its foundation would crumble like a pack of cards. Many people are beginning to realise this and are taking an interest in how their food is grown or raised and asking questions about the limit of our natural resources. Many no longer believe that technology can cure any problem arising from the misuse or overuse of the land. They no longer trust the 'experts' in business, government or the scientific community, who pronounce on whether something is safe to consume or has negative environmental consequences. People who live and work on the land may be more aware, but given the increased specialisation of production, no one has an overview of the whole process and therefore they have to rely on 'experts'.

Understanding the whole

The BSE scare and animal welfare concerns mean that buying meat in a supermarket is no longer an unthinking act. Consumers may be interested in a variety of issues such as what was fed to the animals, how they were cared for, how they were transported and killed, the wages paid to the workers, the subsidies paid, the financial situation of the farmer and then the effects that eating meat has on health, not to mention the ethical issue of eating meat in the first place! Society may becoming more complex, but that has only fuelled people's desire to understand the whole.

However, in a capitalist system, where the profit-motive is the driving force, those who own and control production and distribution have no interest in revealing any information as it would most likely show that their greed has meant that the production process and product are suspect.

People's interest in the natural environment comes not only from concerns for physical and economic survival. As our food, clothes and homes seem to be increasingly 'unnatural', so does our leisure time. People spend thousands of days of their lives engaged in virtual reality activities, such as becoming emotionally involved with characters in soaps or novels, being frightened by films or immersing themselves in simulations and games on their computers. There has been a backlash to this trend amongst many sections of the population. And it is to the natural environment that they turn, looking for activities that provide them with more mental, emotional and physical satisfaction. So, not only are we dependent on the rest of nature for our physical survival, but also for enjoyment of many other aspects of life.

Walking has become the most popular leisure activity. Angling has always been popular, but now water sports such as kayaking and windsurfing are surpassing that. Many others enjoy skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, camping, birdwatching or just having a picnic in a park. Though all classes are fleeing the city because of stress, pollution, ugliness and the need for space, how they engage with the country-side is affected by social class.

The middle class may rent a country cottage, whereas a working class family may stay in a caravan. However, the most popular activities such as walking and climbing are not as middle class as many assume. We only have to think back to the mass trespasses of the thirties, read the climbing literature on working class Glaswegians or simply talk to people on the hills. Reading the extensive literature published for those involved in outdoor activities as well as talking to participants, reveals the extent of their passion. These activities, done in hills, on rivers, on or by the sea, in wildlife reserves, give them the most satisfying experiences of their lives. And it's not just the contact with the land, it's the camaraderie of the social relations that are based on the sharing of experiences which are on a different level from sharing an episode of East Enders.

Smokescreen

Therefore, despite 200 years of urbanisation, all human beings, as a species, belong to the land and therefore need to be part of the discussions on how we should care for it. Though the Countryside Alliance says that 'townies' have no right to participate in these discussions, this is only a smokescreen for the private landowners to prevent anyone but themselves making decisions about the land. To challenge this, we need an anti-capitalist perspective.

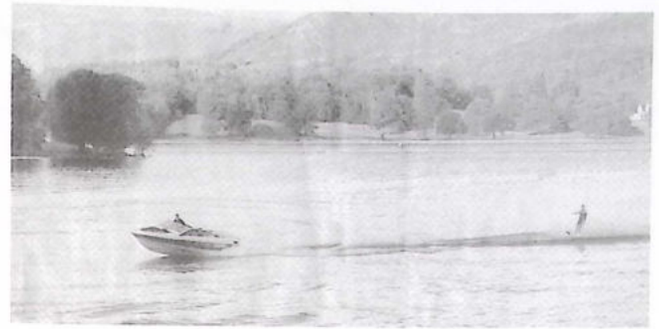
What is meant by this is to see that the way the land is used is dominated by the fact that it is under private ownership and that its products are produced and sold for profit. This system has to go. But once we reject claims to own the land and say it belongs to everyone, we will still have the problem of deciding how to care for the environment and how it is to be used. In other words, though capitalism has brought about unprecedented environmental destruction, the end of capitalism will still leave us with many issues to resolve.

Conflict will exist around many issues. People will have diverse opinions about how the land is to be used based on what they like to eat, or what they think is ethical to eat, and on what they like doing in their leisure time. Getting rid of capitalism will not resolve debates about vegetarianism or whether skiing, angling, deer stalking or mountain biking should be allowed.

One of the biggest areas for conflict is conservation. This might come as a surprise. Conservation is normally considered to be a 'good thing'. However, by looking at some current conservation issues in Scotland, it is clear that the concept of conservation is not as straightforward and unproblematic as it would first appear.

Survival and 'rights'

Conservationists claim they are not 'interest' groups, but are looking after the interests of the planet. Their perspective is based on a combination of two arguments: human survival depends on the conservation of the natural environment, and the rights of other species to survive for their own sake, not just for the needs of humans. A wide range of conservation groups such as the John Muir Trust would like to see more 'wild places' defined as places with 'minimum human impact' and groups who focus on the preservation of one species or sub-species like the RSPB. Some official



conservation bodies like Scottish Natural Heritage say their aim is to reconcile conservation with 'sustainable' economic development. All groups focus on the conservation of the non-human environment, not on how that environment can be used to benefit humans. However, this perspective has many problems.

Exclusivity

Firstly, it is extremely difficult to define such terms as 'wild', 'minimum impact' and 'sustainable'. The only way to have wilderness is to have no humans at all.

Groups like the John Muir trust talk in terms of people enjoying and needing wild places. But if everyone went there, they wouldn't be wild anymore. The only thing that keeps some areas of the world relatively wild is the fact that most of the world's population doesn't have the money to travel. Look at the circus on Everest. And how many people can afford the £20,000 to go? Landowners claim that it is their use of the land for deer and grouse that has kept the land from being turned over more to conifer plantations or being trampled to death by thousands of feet. Therefore we have the Highland Clear-ances to thank for the 'wilderness' of the Scottish hills! In other words, wilderness exists because of exclusivity. In an anarchist-communist society we would not want this, so the issue of how to preserve wild places yet still have human beings enjoy them, needs to be addressed.

The only other solution would be to just not allow humans in certain areas. Related to this is the issue of how much human beings should intervene in nature. For example, forest fires are quite 'natural' in wilderness areas, but should we just let them burn unchecked? We have already intervened to such an extent that to just let things go could have disastrous effects, not just for us, but for other species.

This brings us to another issue. Which species do we choose to conserve? If we just do nothing, we condemn certain species. For example, the introduction of rabbits has caused all sorts of problems for a variety of habitats. On an island in the Outer Hebrides, hedgehogs have managed to migrate there in huge numbers and are threatening the very existence of the wader bird species. Letting 'nature take its course' could mean the destruction of other species that we value.

Human values

A major area of debate in Scotland which illustrates a number of issues is the implementation of the policy of regeneration of native forests. There are several underlying assumptions being made by those who see this regeneration as top priority. First, is that 'native' is 'good' and 'foreign' is 'bad'. Sitka spruce is the villain and the Scots pine is full of virtues. Therefore anything foreign must be removed.

Most would probably agree that the Scots pine is lovely and that as under 2% of Scotland is native forest it would be nice if there was more of it. But this view is still based on human values of what is good and bad and human perceptions of what is 'natural'. Many species now in Britain are not native, yet people have grown to accept them and also there is the danger that the same attitude will apply to everything, including people! In addition, the natural environment is changing all the time, with or without the influence of people, so that we need to be careful about basing our argument for what is a desirable landscape on what is 'natural' or 'native'. Things like the midge and malaria are natural and native, but I don't see any conservation groups arguing for the protection of the midge or the reintroduction of malaria!

Those in favour of regeneration also have to show that trees are somehow more worthy than other forms of nature. It needs to be shown that if the goal is not just some

regeneration but regeneration on an extensive scale, that this is preferable to having a landscape filled with deer, grouse moors or the familiar bare, often snow-capped hill. It is unclear whether their argument is based on ecological or aesthetic reasons. Saying something is 'native' or 'natural' is not enough. What benefits would forests bring that would make it worth getting rid of other species and habitats? The policy of regeneration in Creag Meagaidh Nature Reserve could only be implemented by the killing of hundreds of deer.

To answer this question we are reliant on 'experts'. The health of Scotland is said to depend on having the forests back in order to stop erosion. But what evidence is there that there have been any floods or natural disasters caused by erosion in Scotland? Is it such a problem that it is worth getting rid of other habitats that people value? Other experts argue that native woodlands will provide a habitat for many species such as the pinemartin. But again, we appear to be making a trade-off between species. If the grouse moors are replaced by forest then the native red grouse will be in danger and, since many birds of prey feed on young grouse, this could affect them as well. I am not arguing against the regeneration of native forests. However, it is important to be aware that such policies are based on human beings' perceptions of what is desirable and we are also reliant on 'experts' with their specialised knowledge. This debate needs to be opened up and knowledge shared so that policies are not just made by a few who use their expertise as a form of power.

Livelihoods

Another potential area of conflict for the conservationist is the impact on human livelihoods of conservation policies. The conservationist is most likely to have a job in a conservation agency of some sort, or to have a job that is not directly dependent on the land. If the conservationist aims to promote birds of prey or trees at the expense of deer, grouse and livestock then this could affect the livelihood of many estate workers and farmers. Now, people may argue that there shouldn't be grouse shooting, deer stalking or meat eating in the first place, but try saying that to people on the land, people who are also members of the working class. You will be ensuring that the myth of the urban/rural divide continues to the advantage of the landowners.

Conservationists need to keep in mind that humans are dependent on the products of the land. We can't just use it as something to look at. The conflict between conservation and farming interests can be seen in attitudes towards birds of prey. Again, it is humans who are making a value judgement about what species to conserve. Birds of prey are well-known for killing other animals. Farmers see them as the villains who threaten their young livestock such as lambs whilst birdwatchers will travel hundreds of miles to catch a glimpse of an eagle. Of course we want these creatures to live, but what about our food supply? In a post-capitalist society we will still have similar problems. We need to use the land to produce products for human consumption and we may have to make difficult decisions about killing animals. Of course, we may find better solutions and many problems may no longer exist in an anarchist society, but rural workers must be an integral part of these discussions and their experience cannot be replaced by the admirable romanticism of the stereotypical urban-based conservationist. We should then be able to come up with ways of both providing for human needs and promoting the flourishing of other species.

Recreation

Conservationists have also come into conflict with recreational groups. In many debates that have sprung up around the country over the impact of recreational activity on the land, conservationists are keen to reduce the amount and intensity of human activity They argue that a number of activities have a negative effect on the environment and therefore need to be banned or curtailed. Conservationists, most from outside the area, were key players in the campaign to stop the funicular railway in the Cairngorms with many skiers and locals keen to see it go ahead. The increase in walking has led to serious path erosion and now mountain biking is adding to this problem. The RSPB wants climbers banned from many crags as they are thought to disturb bird life. No one would argue that people should be allowed to pursue their favourite pastime to an extent that the world is destroyed. But some would argue that the huge enjoyment that people get from various outdoor activities is worth some damage to the environment. Some will often agree with the conservationists but when it comes to their activity, they think the conservationists go too far.

Defenders?

Generally, then, conservationists could be seen as defenders of the land against human beings using the land to satisfy both their physical and mental, emotional needs. But the problem is: who are these conservationists? They are also human beings, and human beings with particular positions within a class-based society.

Though private landowners are still extremely powerful in making decisions about land use, increasingly, various conservation organisations are playing a key role. The RSPB is one of the largest landowners in Scotland and the National Trust and Scottish Natural Heritage are very powerful organisations. These organisations claim to speak for the 'public'. They publish a vast amount of information concerning loss of habitat and species and present a view on what should be done. Despite all the information on the urgency of the problems, their plans for action are often very limited, due to the fact that they are closely linked to private landowners and politicians. The problem is that we are isolated from the process of gathering information and making decisions. This reinforces the view that it is humans vs. the environment, with these conservation bodies setting themselves up as the defenders of the land.

Though more radical environmental groups may propose stronger solutions, they share many things in common with the official bodies. They still see themselves as defending the environment from humans as if they aren't humans themselves. This isolates them from the both the urban and rural working class. We need a strategy that encompasses the principles of conservation as well as recognising that humans are an integral part of the land. The land can never be untouched by humans just as we can never remain untouched by our environment. The issue is how we can survive as a species whilst at the same time allowing our environment to flourish. As has been pointed out, there are some very difficult decisions to make and there are no easy answers.

Getting rid of capitalism will not get rid of the problems. However, it should ensure that environmental destruction is slowed down and it should empower people to become experts themselves and get involved in the decisions-making process. It is not just self-professed conservationists who should make decisions and provide expertise. All those who work and enjoy the land are involved and that is everyone. Conservationists can inform the debate but the land is something to be lived in and enjoyed, not just something to be 'gazed' at. That is what every other species does, so why can't human beings do the same?

Young People and the Nazis
The Edelweiss Pirates

Hitler's power may lay us low,
And keep us locked in chains,
But we will smash the chains one day,
We'll be free again.
We've got fists and we can fight,
We've got knives and we'll get them out.
We want freedom, don't we boys?
We're the fighting Navajos.

WHY WERE THE NAZIS able to control Germany so easily? Why was there so little active opposition to them? Why were the old parties of the SPD and KPD unable to offer any real resistance? How could a totalitarian regime so easily contain what had been the strongest working class in Europe?

We are taught that the Nazis duped the German population and that it took the armed might of the Allies to liberate Europe from their enslavement. This article aims to show how the Nazis were able to contain the working class and to tell some of the tale of resistance that really took place.

Dealing with the opposition

Acting with a ruthlessness which surprised their opponents, the Nazis banned their opponents, the Social Democrats and the Communists. For the working class this was far more serious than just the destruction of two state capitalist parties. It was accompanied by the annihilation of a whole area of social life around working class communities. Many of the most confident working class militants were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

The repression was carried out legally. The SA (the brownshirts) now acted in collaboration with the police. Their brutal activities which had once been illegal but tolerated, now became part of official state activity. In some circumstances this meant simple actions like beatings. In others, SA groups moved into and took over working class pubs and centres. The effect was to isolate, intimidate and render powerless the working class.

Many workers believed that the Nazis could not remain in power forever. They believed that the next election would see them swept from power and 'their' parties returned. Workers only needed to bide their time. When it became clear that this was not going to happen, the myth changed. The role for oppositionists became to keep the party structures intact until such time as the Nazis were defeated. There is no doubt that even the simple act of distributing Socialist (SPD) or Communist (KPD) propaganda took an incredible degree of heroism, for the consequences of being caught were quite clear to all – beatings, torture and death. It meant that families would be left without breadwinners, subjected to police surveillance and intimidation. The result was often passivity and inaction.

As early as 1935, workers were aware of the consequences that 'subversive' activity would have on their families. A

blacksmith in 1943 expressed the problem simply: "My wife is still alive, that's all. It's only for her sake that I don't shout it right into their faces… You know these blackguards can only do all this because each of us has a wife or mother at home that he's got to think of… people have too many things to consider. After all, you're not alone in this world. And these SS devils exploit the fact."

Throughout the period of Nazi rule there was industrial unrest, there were strikes and acts of disobedience and even sabotage. All these, however, attracted the attention of the Gestapo. The Gestapo had the assistance of employers and stooges in the workforce. The least a striker could expect was arrest. As a consequence, those who were politically opposed to the Nazi state kept themselves away from industrial struggle. To be arrested would have led not only to personal sacrifice, but also could have compromised the political organisations to which he or she belonged. To reinforce the message to workers, the Gestapo set up special industrial concentration camps attached to major factories.

To put the intensity of Nazi repression into context, during the period 1933-45, at least 30,000 German people were executed for opposing the state. This does not include countless others who died as a result of beatings, of their treatment in camps, or as a result of the official policy of euthanasia for those deemed mentally ill. Thousands of children were declared morally or biologically defective because they fell below the Aryan 'norm' and were murdered by the doctors. This fate also befell youngsters with mental and physical disabilities as well as many who listened to the wrong kind of music.

However, Nazi domination of the working class did not rely solely on repression. Nazi industrial policy aimed to fragment the class, to replace working class solidarity with Nazi comradeship and solidarity with the state.

To start with, pay rises were forbidden. To strengthen competition, hourly rates were to be done away with. Piece rates became the norm. If workers wanted to earn more then they would have to produce more. Workers' interests were to be represented by the German Workers' Front (DAF), which they were forced to belong to and which of course represented solely the interests of the state and the employers.

Unable to obtain pay rises with their employers it became common in a situation of full employment for workers to move from one factory to another in search of higher wages. On the one hand, this defeated the Nazi objectives of limiting pay, on the other hand it further weakened bonds of solidarity between workers.

Knowing that they could not rule solely through fear, the Nazis gave 'welfare' concessions to the working class. Family

allowances were paid for the first time; organised outings and holidays were provided at low cost. For many workers this was their first opportunity to go away on holiday. Social activities were provided through Nazi organisations.

There is little evidence that the Nazis won over the working class ideologically, nonetheless, this combination of repression and amelioration served to confuse many who would otherwise have been outright opponents.

The spectacles we have all seen of Nazi rallies, book burnings, parades and speeches are not evidence that workers were convinced of Nazi rule. It was clear to all what the consequence of not attending, of not carrying a placard or waving a flag would be. However, they must have increased the sense of isolation and powerlessness of those who would have liked to resist. As a result there was little open resistance from working class adults to the Nazis throughout their period in power.

Young people

If the Nazi policy towards adults was based on coercion, their policy towards young people was more subtle. Put simply, the intention was to indoctrinate every young person, to make them a good national socialist citizen proudly upholding the ideals of the party. The means chosen to do this was the Hitler Youth (HJ).

By the end of 1933, all youth organisations outside the Hitler Youth had been banned – with the exception of those controlled by the Catholic Church which was busy cozying up to the Nazis at the time. Boys were to be organised into the Deutsches Jungvolk between the ages of 10 and 14 and the Hitler Youth proper from 14 to 18. They quickly incorporated around 40 per cent of boys. Girls were to be enrolled into the Bund Deutsche Madel (BDM), but the Nazis were much less interested in getting them to join. The objective was to get all boys into the HJ. When this failed to take place, laws were passed gradually making it compulsory by 1939.

In the early days, being in the HJ was far from being a chore. Boys got to take part in sports, go camping, hike, play competitive games – as well as being involved in drill and political indoctrination. Being in the HJ gave youngsters the chance to play one form of authority off against another. They could avoid schoolwork by claiming to be involved in HJ work. The HJ provided excuses when dealing with other authority figures – like parents and priests. On the other hand, they could also blame pressures from school in order to get out of more unpleasant Hitler Youth tasks! In some parts of the country the HJ provided the first opportunity to start a sports club, to get away from parents, to experience some independence.

As the 1930s went on, the function of the HJ and BDM changed. The objectives of the regime became more obviously military and aimed at conquest. The HJ was seen as a way of recruiting and training young men into the armed forces. As war became more likely, the emphasis shifted away from leisure activities and into military training. State policy became one of forcing all to be in the HJ. It made seemingly harmless activities, like getting together with your mates for an evening, criminal offences if they took place outside the HJ or BDM.

Some of the Cologne Edelweiss Pirates. All were later hanged.

The HJ set up its own police squads to supervise young people. These Streifendienst patrols were made up of Hitler Youth members scarcely older than those they were meant to be policing.

By 1938, reports from Social Democrats in Germany to their leaders in exile were able to report that: "In the long run young people too are feeling increasingly irritated by the lack of freedom and the mindless drilling that is customary in the National Socialist organisations. It is therefore no wonder that symptoms of fatigue are becoming particularly apparent among their ranks…"

The outbreak of war brought the true nature of the HJ even more sharply into focus. Older HJ members were called up. More and more time was taken up with drill and political indoctrination. Bombing led to the destruction of many of the sporting facilities. The HJ became more and more obviously a means of oppression.

As the demands for fresh recruits to the armed forces became more intense, the divisions within the HJ became more acute. The German education system at the time was sharply divided along class lines. Most working class children left school at the age of 14. A few went on to secondary or grammar schools along with the children of middle class and professional families. As older HJ members were called up, the middle class school students took the place of the leaders. The rank and file was increasingly made up of young workers hardly likely to take too well to being ordered about at HJ meetings! It is not difficult to imagine the scene of a snotty doctor's kid still in school trying to give orders to a bunch of young factory workers and having to use the threat of official punishment to get his own way. Dissatisfaction grew. Initially, the acute labour shortages of the early war years meant that the Nazis could not resort to the kind of terror tactics that they employed against other dissidents. As the war went on, many of these young people's fathers died or were sent to the front. Many were bombed out of their own homes. The only future they could see for themselves was to wear a uniform and to fight for a lost cause.

One teenager said in 1942: "Everything the HJ preaches is a fraud. I know this for certain, because everything I had to say in the HJ myself was a fraud."

By the end of the 1930s, thousands of young people were finding ways to avoid the clutches of the Hitler Youth. They were gathering together in their own gangs and starting to enjoy themselves again. This terrified the Nazis, particularly when the teenagers started to defend their own social space physically. What particularly frightened the Nazis was that these young people were the products of their own education system. They had no contact with the old SPD or KPD, knew nothing of Marxism or the old labour movement. They had been educated by the Nazis in Nazi schools, their free time had been regimented by the HJ listening to Nazi propaganda and taking part in officially approved activities and sports.

These gangs went under different names. Their favoured clothes varied from town to town as did their badges. In Essen they were called the Farhtenstenze (Travelling Dudes), in Oberhausen and Dusseldorf the Kittelbach Pirates, in Cologne they were the Navajos. But all saw themselves as Edelweiss Pirates (named after an edelweiss flower badge which many wore).

Gestapo files in Cologne contain the names of over 3,000 teenagers identified as Edelweiss Pirates. Clearly, there must have been many more and their numbers must have been even greater when taken over Germany as a whole.

Initially, their activities were in themselves pretty harmless. They hung around in parks and on street corners, creating their own social space in the way teenagers do everywhere (usually to the annoyance of adults). At weekends they would take themselves off into the countryside on hikes and camping trips in a perverse way mirroring the kind of activities initially provided by the HJ themselves. Unlike the HJ trips, however, these expeditions comprised boys and girls together, so adding a different, more exciting and more normal dimension than that provided by the HJ. Whereas the HJ had taken young people away for trips to isolate and indoctrinate them, the Edelweiss Pirates expeditions got them away from the party and gave them the time and space to be themselves.

On their trips they would meet up with Pirates from other towns and cities. Some went as far as to travel the length and breadth of Germany during wartime, when to travel without papers was an illegal action.

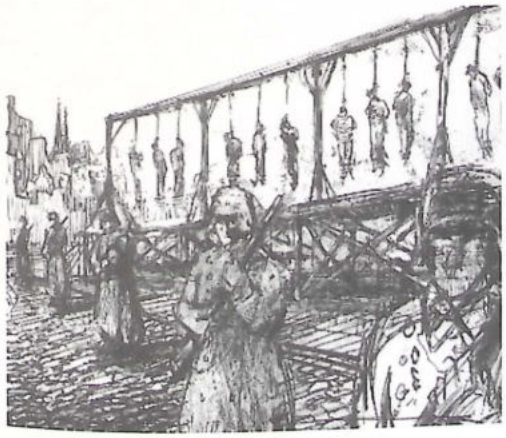
Daring to enjoy themselves on their own was a criminal act. They were supposed to be under Party control. Inevitably they came across HJ Streifendienst patrols. Instead of running, the Pirates often stood and fought. Reports sent to Gestapo offices suggest that as often as not the Edelweiss Pirates won these fights. "I therefore request that the police ensure that this riff-raff is dealt with once and for all. The HJ are taking their lives into their hands when they go out on the streets."

The activities of the Edelweiss Pirates grew bolder as the war progressed. They engaged in pranks against the Nazis, fights against their enemies, and moved on to small acts of sabotage. They were accused of being slackers at work and social parasites. They began to help Jews, army deserters and prisoners of war. They painted anti-Nazi slogans on walls and some started to collect Allied propaganda leaflets and shove them through people's letterboxes.

"There is a suspicion that it is these youths who have been inscribing the walls of the pedestrian subway on the Altenbergstrasse with the slogans 'Down with Hitler', 'The OKW (Military High Command) is lying', 'Medals for Murder', 'Down with Nazi Brutality', etc. However often these inscriptions are removed, within a few days new ones appear on the walls again." (1943 Dusseldorf-Grafenberg Nazi party report to the Gestapo)

As time went on, a few grew bolder and even more heroic. They raided army camps to obtain arms and explosives, made attacks on Nazi figures other than the HJ and took part in partisan activities. The Head of the Cologne Gestapo was one victim of the Edelweiss Pirates.

The authorities reacted with their full armoury of repressive measures. These ranged from individual warnings, round-ups and temporary detention (followed by a head shaving), to weekend imprisonment, reform school, labour camp, youth concentration camp or criminal trial. Thousands were caught up in this hunt. For many, the end was death. The so-called leaders of the Cologne Edelweiss Pirates were publicly hanged in November 1944.



However, as long as the Nazis needed workers in armament factories and soldiers for their war, they could not resort to the physical extermination of thousands of young Germans. Moreover, it is fair to say that the state was confused as to what to do with these rebels. They came from German stock, the sort of people who should have been grateful for what the Nazis gave. Unwilling to execute thousands and unable to comprehend what was happening, the state was equally unable to contain them.

Wall of silence

So why has so little been heard of the Edelweiss Pirates? When I started researching this article, I found it extremely hard to find information about them. Most seemed to revolve around the research of the German historian Detlev Peukert, whose writings remain essential reading. Searches of the internet revealed only two articles.

A number of explanations come to mind. The post-war Allied authorities wanted to reconstruct Germany into a modern western, democratic state. To do this, they enforced strict labour laws including compulsory work. The Edelweiss Pirates had a strong anti-work ethos. So they came into conflict with the new authorities too. A report in 1949 spoke of the "widespread phenomenon of unwillingness to work that was becoming a habit of many young people". The prosecution of so-called 'young idlers' was sometimes no less rigid under Allied occupation than it was under the Nazis. A court in 1947 sent one young woman to prison for five months for 'refusal to work'. So the young became enemies of the new order too.

The political opponents of the Nazis had been either forced into exile, murdered or hid their politics. Clandestine activity had centred on keeping party structures intact. They could not afford to acknowledge that physical resistance had been alive and well and based on young people's street gangs! To the politicians of the CDU and SPD, the Edelweiss Pirates were just as much riff-raff as they were to the Nazis. The myth of the just war used by the allies relied heavily on the idea that all Germans had been at least silent during the Nazi period if not actively supporting the regime. To maintain this fiction the actions of 'street hooligans' in fighting the Nazis had to be forgotten.

Fifty-five years on, interest in the Edelweiss Pirates is beginning to resurface. More is being published on them and a film is being planned. We need to make sure that they are never forgotten again. As the producers of the film say: "the Edelweiss Pirates were no absolute heroes, but rather ordinary people doing extraordinary things." It is precisely this that gives us hope for the future.

We march by banks of Ruhr and Rhine
And smash the Hitler Youth in twain.
Our song is freedom, love and life,
We're the Pirates of the Edelweiss.

WORKPLACE NOTES

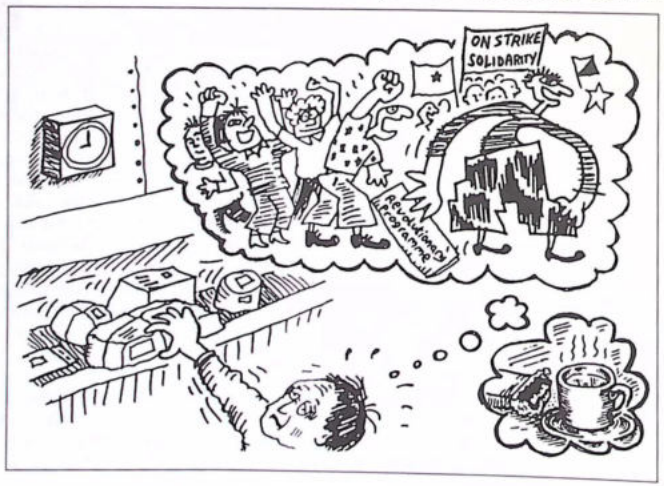
Or a brief history of recent mystifications

Two issues ago we began a series called Workplace Notes, which was to be a regular bulletin from workers of all kinds about their situations. Not having managed to get a proper second contribution to this series(!), we have decided to do a piece that briefly explores our thinking on the economy and the role of sections of the working class. This will be elaborated on in future issues. It is hoped that this article and those that follow will create a useful level of discussion.

LAST YEAR I READ a pamphlet from 1974 by Martin Glaberman called *The Working Class and Social Change*. This is a gem of a pamphlet, despite the traces of Marxist baggage that it carries, and in these days of 'Eco', and now 'Anti-Capitalist', mystification, I feel it is essential reading for those who want to understand just how we may one day remove the capitalist economic system. Here is a quote from it:

"The ability of the working class to transform society relates both to the reality of [their] struggle and where it is located. That is, all of the resources, which everyone associates with wealth, with capital, and with the government – means of transportation, means of communication, newspapers, railroads, factories – belong to the ruling class only as long as people permit it. What happens when the workers do not want to run the trains, or send their own messages on the telegraph, or print their own newspapers? All of a sudden this vast power and wealth disintegrates. That is the reality of social revolution and that is the reality of the modern industrial working class."

In 1974, Glaberman was trying to confront ideas that were circulating around society that the working class was disappearing in the industrialised countries. On one hand, it was argued that manual (blue collar) workers were disappearing because of developments in automation and it was also argued that with the general rise of affluence the old-fashioned working class had become middle class because they now 'owned' more things like cars and televisions. On the other hand, it was being argued that the working class was vanishing because everyone was joining it. ("We are all workers together, students, teachers, blue collar workers, white collar workers, and salaried people of various kinds… [all] …except for a handful of capitalists.") Many of us will remember Margaret Thatcher's claim that she was working class because she worked.



Unfortunately, Glaberman's (and others') efforts to oppose this sort of thinking, which was, of course, a mystification engendered by sections of the ruling class to lessen the significance of the working class to capitalism in peoples' eyes, have largely failed. The really sad thing, though, is that the ideology he tried to combat had very quickly entered the heads of people who called themselves "revolutionaries" and it has become even more entrenched down the years. There are specific historical reasons for this phenomenon. Let's take a little look at them.

The unions

By the 1960s, it was becoming increasingly apparent to many workers in those countries where the trades unions were fully established and incorporated into the State, that rather than support the interests of its members the unions in reality removed any power from the collective mass of the workers and placed it in the hands of elected, and virtually unassailable, officials. Instead of being a tool with which workers could fight their exploiters, the union turned out to be an organisation which relentlessly restrained workers and kept them in the dark. Wildcat strikes, that is, strikes without the support, and even against, the union, became a well-documented phenomenon. And the rise of militant shop stewards who opposed the union leadership took place.

Some radical observers of these events commented on the absolutely anti-worker nature of the unions and also the dangers and problems involved in trying to use, or even take over, the union hierarchy for the benefit of the members. Correctly, they came to the conclusion that the unions could not somehow be 'reclaimed' by the workers, for a whole lot of reasons based on real events. Many libertarians, however, on seeing what they saw as the 'failure' of workplace resistance to capital (when they should have merely noted the inevitably anti-proletarian position of all unions) chose to look for inspiration outside of the workplace and aimed at creating a movement of people against oppression. This idea was aided by the apparent success of specific movements against specific oppressions, such as 'feminism' or the war in Vietnam.

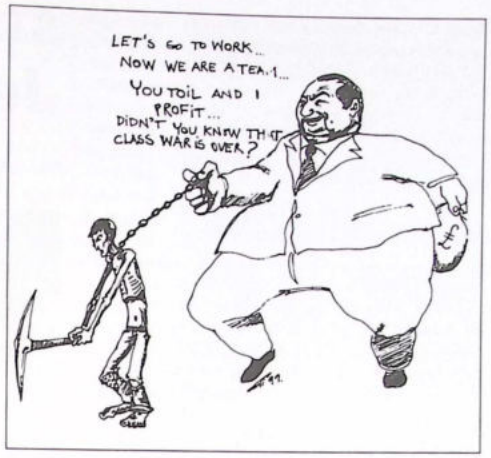
But these movements, as worthy as they were, were not working class movements, and there was never anything concrete or effective in them that potentially challenged the existence of the capitalist economy itself, the source of the exploitation and oppression of the majority of the world's population. The glamour of such movements allied to the presumed 'failure' of rebellion in the workplace, led many radicals to abandon any serious study of the motor of the prevailing economy and society and pin their hopes on a generalised insurrection of nice people amongst the poor and oppressed who suddenly saw the need to live very differently.

This moving away from looking at society in terms of class and peoples' relationship to the means of the production of wealth, and instead looking at particular and general oppressions, has been aided over the last couple of decades or so by an apparent shift in the outlook of our rulers and the media. This shift was designed to deride the old-fashioned ways of 'industrial conflict', to make strikes and the like seem archaic and also doomed to failure for workers. And indeed, with the mass unemployment that was engineered in the 1980s to help facilitate a restructuring of the economy, along with some major offensives against sections of the working class (eg the miners and printers in Britain), it could easily appear to the gullible that industrial conflict was out-of-date and pointless. The good people of the press and television are now so 'disinterested' in old-fashioned conflict at work that they can't be bothered to cover it – take the recent, globally important, dispute in the Liverpool docks for example.

"The working class can kiss my arse, I've got the foreman's job at last."

Do you remember the television sitcoms and the like of the 1960s and '70s in Britain? Of course, they were all crap, but they reflected the acceptable pre-occupations of 'society' at the time and a lot of them discussed, however stupidly, issues of class and class conflict.

Do you remember when the Channel 4 soap opera Brookside started? The central family had a shop steward for a father. Now, of course, we have our own analysis of the general role of the shop steward, but for the writers of Brookside, the shop steward was a potential working class hero. As the 'Thatcherite' 1980s wore on, though, this character became more difficult for the writers to sustain and, I think, he ended up as a tyrannical bully who hit his wife and seemed to be having a nervous breakdown. They had another character in the soap who was a scab, but after a while he became one of the nicest and soundest characters. Another character became a shop steward at one point, but he was really weak and dodgy and I think he ended up becoming a drug dealer and heroin addict, before being rehabilitated as a self-employed type. In fact, being self-employed is by far the dominant mode of existence for soap opera characters across the board. These days 'ordinary people', the 'working class', on television, do not actually work for others but own their own businesses. There is more to this than simply the possibility that it is easier to write about self-employed people. When On the Buses was on TV, the working class really existed, but now it doesn't really exist and everyone has disappeared into a land where most people are self-employed or 'professional'. Do you get the drift of what I'm trying to say? The ruling ideas of our society are the ideas that the ruling class promotes.



We are now encouraged to think that the economy is beyond us (it lives in the city, or somewhere in a computer), that there is no manufacturing going on (except maybe in distant lands), and that there is no longer a definable working class. ('revolutionary' groups such as Green Anarchist have 'gone beyond' the concept of the working class altogether, and the nearest they get to a description of capitalism is a vague and unreliable notion of 'civilisation'. People like Lady Thatcher can pat themselves on the back for a job well done when they see so-called revolutionaries with such little understanding of the world they live in). If we accept any of this clever mystification then we lose sight of what global society rests on, what makes it tick. The way people live now, all over the world, is due simply to the capitalist economy, the thing that keeps it going is the work that proletarians do, their waged labour. The only thing that will stop the economy, and therefore the society which rests on it, is the seizure by workers of all the means of production and their transformation into useful things, or their destruction.

These days many 'revolutionaries' are unaware of what is important about the fact of the working class. No matter how a revolution against capitalism might develop, it is vitally important to remember that unless those workers who work in the most important sectors of the economy (that is, most important for the running of the entire economy and the maintenance of profits) actually wrest control of those sectors from the bosses then there will be no revolution.

Anti-capitalism

The mystification around the fact of the working class and its relationship to capitalism (the economy) has reached new and giddy heights recently with the newly fashionable concept of 'anti-capitalism'. No longer is 'anti-capitalism' something that implies a thoroughgoing critique of the entire global economy and the position of the working class. Today, it has become something that means supporting 'local' capitalist businesses and economies against large multi-national corporations, it means supporting nationalist struggles around the world against 'foreign' tyranny. 'Anti-capitalism' is the new 'anti-imperialism'.

In the old days, those of us who were not 'anti-imperialist' but were against imperialism, held such a view and practice because 'anti-imperialist' is a political

position supporting national liberation movements opposed to imperialist powers (see Jean Barrot's letter to *Aufheben*, Autumn 1998). At present, therefore, it is necessary to critique this concept of 'anti-capitalism' and to distance ourselves from it, which isn't that easy, of course, because we used to identify ourselves by the same term, though it meant something else… Are you with me?!

"Some are born to endless night..."

Where has the new definition of the term 'anti-capitalist' come from? This writer is not sure, but would hazard a guess that it has emerged from the ecology movement. The basic premise of this movement, in all its variants, is to put the ecology of the planet before the interests of the working class or the destruction of the capitalist economy. Even the name of one of its most radical groupings gives away its anti-proletarian programme: Earth First! (Although evidence shows that many adherents of this network have subverted the original premise in order to pursue class struggle objectives).

Still, it is obvious to anyone that the priorities of 'ecology' and the green movement have deeply permeated anarchist and leftist politics across the world. Before this had happened, though, it was the case that anti-imperialism had permeated the same milieu. Thus, we have constantly had support for the leaderships of national liberation struggles, and indeed the concept itself, from large swathes of anarchists and leftists over the last 40 years at least. (The latest trendy thing is still support for the unashamedly nationalist Zapatistas of Mexico, whose programme is clearly anti-proletarian and pro-capitalist and pro-State – see *Unmasking the Zapatistas* by Wildcat, photocopy available from the AF for £2, inc p&p.)

Now, if you mix up the old-style anti-imperialism with the new-style green hatred of large companies (which position always, therefore, favours small companies) in a big plastic bucket, what you come up with is a concept that could easily be called 'anti-capitalist'. And there we are, the mystification, the confusion, is complete!

During and after the Seattle demonstration against the World Trade Organisation, Bill Clinton, genius that he is, came out in support of the demands of the protesters and stated that, in future, events like the WTO conference should involve representatives from all the different groups and campaigns present. He exclaimed his sympathy for local capitalism and nationalist self-determination, and worries over the power of the 'big' countries and the big corporations. Clinton has also recently proved himself worthy of the 'anti-capitalist' tag by attacking that giant corporation and monopolist, Microsoft. Have we really gone so far down the road, away from any understanding of what lies at the heart of our society and what will actually have to be done to finally destroy the power of the capitalist economy, that we must grudgingly accept that even Bill Clinton is a comrade? It sure is looking that way.

Read the Glaberman pamphlet.

Photocopied copies of the Glaberman pamphlet are available for £2, cheques made payable to the AF, at the usual address.

STATELESS PERSON
Jean Malaquais

We restart our occasional series on culture.

WLADIMIR MALACKI was born in Warsaw in 1908 of a Polish family of Jewish extraction which had renounced Judaism. His father was a man of letters, a teacher of Latin and Greek, and a great lover of books. His mother was a socialist militant of the Jewish internationalist organisation, the Bund, which had developed in Poland. His family perished in the Nazi concentration camps.

In 1926, he decided to leave Poland, travelling through Russia, Romania, Turkey and Palestine, before ending up in France.

Malacki had idealised France as the political paradise. He was soon to be rudely awakened. The France of 1926, riddled with xenophobia and anti-Semitism, gave a cold welcome to the young man. His Polish passport was seized by the authorities, making him a stateless person. He got work in a number of jobs, including working in the mines at Gardane in the south of France. Here he worked alongside workers from all over the world, from all parts of the French Empire, from Indochina and Africa. This experience was to be the basis of his first novel *Les Javanais*. At the same time he devoured every book that came his way. Disgusted by nationalism and xenophobia, he contacted the Trotskyist Ligue Communiste, but, unlike his friend Marc Chirik, did not join it.

By now going under the name of Jean Malaquais, Malacki ended up in Paris in 1935, where he worked unloading crates at Les Halles market. In Paris he made contact with the left-wing of Trotskyism organised in the Union Communiste and the Italian Bordigists who had been forced to flee to France and Belgium by the rise of fascism and who edited Bilan.

In Paris, he read the paper of the writer André Gide, where he regretted never having to earn a living. Writing a sarcastic reply to the writer he was surprised to receive a cheque for 100 francs from Gide. He tore this up in disgust, writing back: "If you think you can buy a little bit of paradise on my back with 100 francs you are mistaken."

The correspondence continued, with Gide ending up employing Malaquais as his private secretary, giving him the opportunity to write himself. Gide realised that the young man was a gifted and passionate writer. *Les Javanais*, a social novel on immigration and the xenophobic France of the extreme right organisations, was rejected by one major publishing house, but was finally published in 1939, receiving the prestigious Renaudot prize, and being translated into several languages.

Escape

In the meantime, the Spanish Civil War had broken out and Malaquais went there in 1936. Here he joined the militia columns of the left Marxist POUM and the Lenin Column formed of dissident Italian Bordigists like Enrico Russo (Candiani). He had the misfortune to be arrested and confronted by Ilya Ehrenburg, Russian Stalinist writer working for the Russian secret police and was close to being shot as a 'fascist agent' and 'provocateur'. He managed to escape back to France. Here he made contact with Victor Serge, the French-Russian writer and with the Yugoslav, Ante Ciliga, who had both been released from Stalin's Soviet concentration camps.

Despite being stateless, the French State judged Malaquais sufficiently French to conscript him into the Army on the outbreak of war. He was captured by the Germans, but managed to escape and fled south to Marseilles. Here he fell in with Serge and the surrealists André Breton and Benjamin Peret. He got employment in Le Croque-Fruit, a co-operative run by Trotskyists. With Marc Chirik, he denounced the exploitation of workers in the co-operative. They were both sacked. Chirik, under the name of Marc Lavergne, is the hero of Malaquais' masterpiece *Planète sans visa* (Planet without visa), published in 1947.

Malaquais managed to get a boat to Venezuela and then Mexico in 1943. Here he associated with Peret, Breton, Serge, the French left socialist Marceau Pivert, and the Spanish Civil War veteran Grandizo Munis. He was able to edit his *Carnets de Guerre* (War Notebooks) which he had started at the beginning of the World War. It was a platform for his denunciation of all forms of patriotism and chauvinism, and took an internationalist stand against both sides in the war. Attacked publicly by Serge, as was Marceau Pivert, Malaquais broke with him.

He spent the next few years in the Unites States, returning to France in 1947-48. Here, he joined the left communist group, Internationalisme, which had emerged from Bordigism and in which his old friend Marc Chirik was active. Others active in this group for a time were Maximilien Rubel, Louis Evrard and Serge Bricianer.

Independent

He returned to the States in 1948, teaching European literature up to 1968, without being attached to a university, but acting as a roving speaker. He was given American citizenship, although he always regarded himself proudly as a stateless person. No longer a militant and of an increasingly independent libertarian communist outlook, he made contact with various council communists around the world like Rubel in France, Anton Pannekoek, and Henk Canne-Meyer in Holland. In the States he made contact with the German council communist Paul Mattick and the Marxist-Humanist Raya Dunaevskaja, as well as Herbert Marcuse. He also put up Albert Camus when that writer visited the States. On a long stay in France in the '60s he participated in the meetings of the group animated by Rubel, around the magazine *Cahiers pour le socialisme des conseils* (Notebooks for council socialism). Returning to France from a conference tour in Australia he found himself plunged into the events of May 1968, which filled him with enthusiasm. He started discussing with the groups of the anti-authoritarian council communists. Returning to the States he kept up his links with these groups through correspondence and frequent visits.

He visited Poland in 1980 and talked with workers in the Solidarnosc unions. He moved back to Europe in the '80s , living in Switzerland maintaining his links with the groups in Paris. He never totally subscribed to the certainties of these groups, but had a gut reaction to the myth of socialist Russia and to all forms of the State. As he said, he was: "Anti-cop, anti-capitalist, anti- all that which alienates man (sic)". These were to be consistent themes in his activities and his writings. His political journey led him from the left of Trotskyism to a anti-authoritarian council communist position not far from that of class struggle anarchist communism. Another theme in his works was his affirmation of life, that despite everything life was worth living. As he said: "The best thing about life is life!" Malaquais died in December 1998.

This year marks the republication of many of his books in France, including *Planète sans visa*. The background to this book is the situation in Marseilles in 1940, peopled with black marketeers, collaborators and fascists on one hand, and on the other Jews, refugees, anti-fascists seeking a visa to escape France. The book is filled with immense compassion for the refugees, and somehow he describes them individually, in a whole range of accents. As this century ends, and as we remember the great waves of refugees produced by the world wars, and gaze in horror at the mass exoduses in the Balkans and East Timor, this book is a testament for all the wretched of the earth. With a bit of luck, someone will translate it into English.

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In the tradition: part two

The Second World War and after

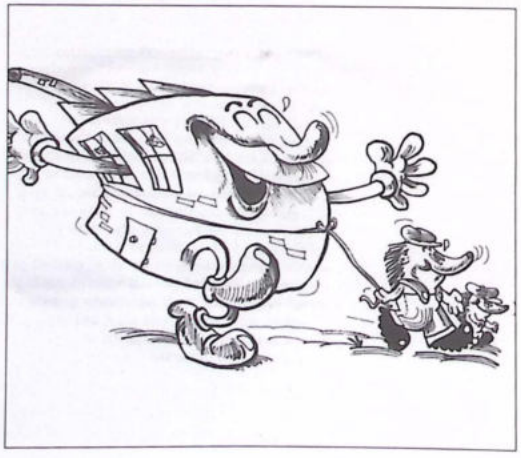
We continue our series *In the tradition*, on the roots of the Anarchist Federation's politics.

FEW ORGANISED POLITICAL groups opposed the Second World War from a class position. Those minorities who did included the anarchists, council communists (the remnants of the revolutionary workers movement of the 1920s in Germany, Holland and elsewhere) and left communists such as the Bordigists (Italian communists in exile who supported the positions of the first leader of the Italian Communist Party). In occupied Europe these groups were isolated and faced great dangers in trying to continue any political intervention. During the war years theoretical developments were understandably limited, militants were too busy dodging bullets, the draft etc. Following the thesis of their deceased leader, the Trotskyists predicted the inevitable collapse of the post-war Soviet Union to barbarism/capitalism or the 'political' revolution (read change of leadership) which would put Russia back on the road to socialism.

Social democratic consensus

Optimism about possibilities for revolutionary change immediately following the war were shared by many on the left, anarchists and libertarian communists included. Memories of the wave of revolution at the end of the first world war remained. However, the way the pre-war revolutionary movement in Germany had been smashed, and the dominance of those 'heroes of the resistance', the Communist Parties in France and Italy, meant that upheaval was limited to strike movements rather than insurrections. Benefiting from the economic boom brought by post-war restructuring, a social democratic consensus prevailed in Europe. In Eastern Europe once powerful workers' movements were now under the Stalinist jackboot, having been 'liberated' by the Red Army. So, many revolutionaries felt the need to reassess the socialist project in light of the developments over the past 30 years.

In 1946, a dissident faction developed within the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, whose leading lights included Cornelius Castoriadis, Claude Lefort and Francois Lyotard. Their movement away from Trotskyist orthodoxy led them to leave the Fourth International and, in 1948, to launch a journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Socialism or Barbarism) which rejected the Trotskyist idea that the USSR was a "degenerated workers state". Rather, SoB argued that the Soviet Union was a form of state capitalism.



In itself, this was hardly a revelation, after all the Soviet Union had been characterised as such, by anarchists and left communists, as early as 1921. What was innovative was the idea developed by SoB of the bureaucratisation of society as a universal phenomenon, of which the Soviet Union was a particular variation ("totalitarian" as opposed to "fragmented" as in the West). This theory of bureaucratisation had consequences for the subsequent development of SoB's politics.

Early meetings of SoB were attended by – among others – French Bordigists, Fontenis and fellow comrades, and by the people who would later set up the Situationist International. The meetings must have been very interesting!

Autonomous struggle

Other than analysing the nature of the Soviet Union, the group also focussed on the importance of workers' autonomous struggles against their official 'representation', such as the Labour and Communist Parties, but particularly against the trade unions. Castoriadis made no attempt to hide the influence of the Council Communist Anton Pannekoek, in his understanding of socialism as something the working class does, rather than something that is done to it or is forced upon it by objective circumstance.

The post war boom which showed little sign of abating led some within SoB, particularly but not only Castoriadis, to believe that capitalism had overcome its tendency to fall into periodic crisis and that, consequently, the existence of social struggle pointed to a different crisis, namely that of the organisation of social life under bureaucratic capitalism. For Castoriadis, the struggle between the owners of the means of production and the workers had been superseded by the struggle between the order-givers and order-takers, between the bureaucracy and those who carry out the orders of the bureaucrats. The struggle, therefore, had come down to the struggle over who manages production, the producers themselves or another strata.

In terms of approach to organisational concerns, SoB started off from a partyist perspective but became more spontaneist until its demise in 1966. Castoriadis himself dropped out of political life to become a professional intellectual (a critical psychologist no less!) soon after. Francois Lyotard found well-paid work defending class society and theoretical cretinism as a guru of post-modernism.

In 1963, SoB split and a group known as Pouvoir Ouvrier (Workers' Power, not to be confused with the British Trot group) emerged, critical of the 'new' class analysis, arguing for a more 'traditional' class analysis and the need for a vanguard-type organisation not so far removed from that of the Trotskyists. This group showed how a political current can get it half right!

Platformism

The influence the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (see 'In the tradition: part one') was felt particularly strongly in France and the debate between Platformists and Synthesists raged in France throughout the 1930s. The Second World War put these arguments on ice for a time but they immediately resurfaced with the coming of 'peace'. The French Anarchist Federation became, for a time, dominated by Platformists, changing its name to the Libertarian Communist Federation (FCL) and excluding those who opposed the changes. The FCL emphasised engagement in the day-to-day struggles of the exploited and oppressed and an opposition to philosophical navel-gazing.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism

In 1953, Georges Fontenis of the FCL published the *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism*. The Manifesto, which remained untranslated into English until almost 35 years later, remains probably the most coherent example of Platformist writing available. In it, Fontenis powerfully argues that anarchism is a product of social and class struggle and not an "abstract philosophy" or "individualist ethic". Rather, he states: "It was born in and out of the social and it had to wait for a given historic period and a given state of class antagonism for anarchist communist aspirations to show themselves clearly for the phenomenon or revolt to result in a coherent and completely revolutionary conception."

The *Manifesto*, like the Platform before it, defended theoretical unity; tactical unity; collective responsibility and a collective method of action, organised through a specific organisation. Whilst it rejected the notion of the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' as a term too open to interpretation to be of use, the *Manifesto* was viewed by some to lean too much towards a Leninism *sans* Lenin.

Noir et Rouge and the Groupes Anarchistes d'Action Révolutionnaire

In 1955, the Revolutionary Anarchist Action Groups (GAAR) split from the Fédération Communiste Libertaire (FCL), unhappy with all direction the FCL was taking (including flirtations with 'revolutionary' electoralism!), but wishing to continue to defend Platformism.

The group launched a magazine *Noir et Rouge* (Black and Red) in 1956, which continued until 1970. The group changed its name to *Noir et Rouge* in 1961 and a year later some of those involved (re)joined the French Anarchist Federation. *Noir et Rouge* had as their initial aim to "Prepare the basis of a rejuvenated anarchism" and in order to do this the group attempted a reappraisal of the revolutionary experiences of the 20th century, particularly the experiences of workers' councils in Russia and the collectivisations in the Spanish revolution but also those of Hungary 1956 and the more recent attempts at 'selfmanagement' in Yugoslavia and Algeria. This led the group, particularly after 1961, to criticise all 'traditional' revolutionary politics, including Platformism.

It would appear that Socialisme ou Barbarie and Noir et Rouge were converging from very different backgrounds during the 1950s and early 1960s. Unlike the majority of the GAAR, the magazine group turned away from a stress on organisation towards a more spontaneous approach.

Unlike Socialisme ou Barbarie however, little of their writing was published in the English language and so their pioneering attempts to 'rejuvenate' anarchism are almost unknown outside France. Perhaps the most (in)famous associate of Noir et Rouge was Daniel Cohn-Bendit, 'Danny the Red', who would play a role as spokesperson for the May events in France. Noir et Rouge, like SoB, and the Situationists (see below) had an important influence on the build-up to May 68 and the events themselves, despite the limited circulation of their ideas and publications. Something worth remembering when plodding on with our activities and propaganda!

Gruppi Anarchici d'Azione Proletaria.

In post war Italy, anarchists influenced by the Platformist tradition and by the critical Marxism of the German communist Karl Korsch emerged. They opposed the direction of the large synthesist organisation, the Italian Anarchist Federation (FAI), which was beginning to reject class analysis in favour of a vague humanistic version of anarchism. Unlike the French Platformists, the Italians decided to split off from the FAI and form their own organisation, the Anarchist Groups of Proletarian Action (GAAP) in 1949/50. They emphasised the need for a rigorous political approach, an engagement with Marxism, and defended the class basis of anarchism. Much of their energy was engaged in the struggle against Stalinism, in the shape of the massive Italian Communist Party. On an international level they called for the opening of a revolutionary 'Third Front' against American and Soviet imperialism and were part of the short-lived Libertarian Communist International alongside comrades in France and Spain. Isolated from traditional anarchism and ultimately marginalized by Stalinism in a period of low class struggle, the GAAP eventually merged with Azione Comunista, a confederation of dissident Trotskyist, Bordigist and former Communist Party militants, from which they were after a short time effectively expelled. This led to the group's disintegration.

Hungary 1956

The Hungarian uprising of 1956 came as a breath of fresh air against the stink of Stalinism and had repercussions worldwide, inspiring many socialists of the post war generation to question not only the validity of 'actually existing socialism' but to ask "what is the content of socialism?" The thesis of Socialisme ou Barbarie concerning the anti-bureaucratic nature of authentic socialism seemed acutely relevant. The group itself took the view that: "...over the coming years, all significant questions will be condensed into one: are you for or against the action and the program of the Hungarian workers?"

So what exactly was the Hungarian Revolution and why was it such a turning point? Hungary in 1956 was under the government of Imre Nagy, a watered-down Stalinist entrusted by Moscow to 'liberalise' Hungary to put a secure lid on social discontent. Despite his 'reforms', the system of exploitation in the name of socialism continued to engender opposition.

On 23rd October 1956, following a mobilisation in the capital, Budapest, by students demanding moderate reform, some of a 200,00 crowd of demonstrators attacked the state radio station and so began the Hungarian revolt. If students and intellectuals had provided the spark, it was the working class who carried the flame and made sure that the arrival of Soviet tanks was met with fierce resistance.

Over the next few days a wave of insurrectionary fervour enveloped Hungary as workers left their factories and offices to take part in assaults upon the headquarters of the local 'red bourgeoisie' and their secret police. Workers' councils emerged in every industrial centre, effectively taking power at all levels. These councils co-ordinated at a local and regional level and attempted to realise a form of workers' control in the workplaces.

The 'programme' of the workers' councils varied from area to area but nowhere did they call for the reintroduction of 'free market' capitalism. The limitations of their form of workers' control never had time to show themselves as the Hungarian revolution, failing to spread beyond its national borders, eventually succumbed to the military might of the Soviet army. The experience of the councils, which developed spontaneously, without the leadership of any vanguard party and which within a matter of days took responsibility for production, distribution and communication on a national level had an enormous impact on those in the revolutionary movement willing to see past Stalinist lies about an attempted 'capitalist restoration' by 'nationalists'. Whatever the limitations of the councils' programme, the fact that the working class had once more shown its capacity for autonomous action was an inspiration for those fighting for working class self-organisation.

Solidarity

Three years later in Britain, a current developed, under the influence of Socialisme ou Barbarie, which broke with Trotskyism (in this case the Socialist Labour League led by Gerry Healy). Originally called Socialism Reaffirmed, the group would become known as Solidarity and exist in one form or another for almost 30 years. Although initially seeing itself as a Marxist group critical of the Bolshevik heritage, it soon developed its own character as a 'national organisation' of libertarian socialists. In 1961 it published an English translation of the key statement of the Socialisme ou Barbarbie group and consequently published much of the writing of Castoriadis (under the pen name Paul Cardan), including his post-1964 work.

Like Castoriadis, Solidarity defended the need for workers' self-management of production and of society, but not all those involved in the organisation fully accepted his notion of the new revolutionary 'subject' being "order takers" rather than proletarians. The Situationist International (see below) suggested that, thanks to Solidarity's translator, the group received Castoriadis' work "...like the light that arrives on Earth from stars that have already long burned out" and were unaware that the founder of Socialisme ou Barbarie had long since died, politically speaking.

Although the Anarchist Federation generally rejects the term 'self-management' with all its ambiguity, it is obvious that many people within Solidarity interpreted the term as meaning the end of production for sale or exchange. Whatever Solidarity's weaknesses (not least their fairly lax attitude to maintaining an international organisation and their lack of political direction after they effectively split around 1980), Solidarity was involved in important revolutionary activity and publishing for at least 20 of its 30 years, producing a wealth of literature defending a coherent vision of libertarian socialism that was unavailable elsewhere. Compared to many of the 'class struggle' anarchists in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, they developed a consistent body of politics that recognised the need for working class self-organisation outside social democratic and Leninist models.

The Situationist International

The Situationist International was formed in 1957, from the unification of three avant-garde artistic/cultural groups. For the first five years of its existence, its main theoretical focus was on developing a critique of art, culture, town planning and anything else that they considered worth critiquing. Only in 1962, did the group – which, although numerically small, was geographically spread across Europe (based mainly in France) – really develop a political perspective based on salvaging what was authentically revolutionary from the history and practice of the workers' movement. Much of their early political orientation was influenced by Socialisme ou Barbarie, and, like that group, their ambition was to help in the creation of a 'new revolutionary movement' based upon the proletariat of the 'industrial advanced countries'. By the time the situationists had formulated their positions, Socialisme ou Barbarie had, however, lost hope in the proletariat and had lost any dynamic presence in revolutionary political life (see above).

One major problem with any appraisal of the Situationist International is the legacy left by some of their followers and interpreters (known sometimes as Pro-Situs), which leaves them looking like disgruntled, destructive intellectuals with very little positive contribution to make. Actually, judged on their own writings and record of activity, they were far from the 'arty misfits' their opponents would like to paint them. The situationists took Marx's conception of alienation and applied it to society as a whole rather than just to the world of work. They argued that alienated labour was central to existence in all aspects of daily life, as proletarians were confronted by their own alienation at every turn about. In culture, sport, sexuality, education, pseudo-rebellion, everything that could be turned into a commodity had been. This society of mediated images, of 'spectacle' could only be swept away by a proletarian revolution and the realisation of "generalised self-management", which for the situationists meant the abolition of wage labour and the state: "The only reason the situationists do not call themselves communists is so as not to be confused with the cadres of pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese anti-worker bureaucracies." Italian section of the S.I. (1969)

So, by their actions should they be judged. In the May 1968 events in Paris the situationists, their comrades and allies were faced with a real-life revolutionary situation. Did they cut the mustard? Find out next time.

***To come...* May 1968 until today**

Read *A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956,* a pamphlet produced by London Anarchist Federation, 60p plus postage from AF (London) 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Greg Minns

GREG MINNS IS a young activist from North East England, incarcerated against his will in a residential home for the mentally ill in Lancashire (see *Organise!* 52). Here he has had a lot of his privileges removed. His posters have been taken down off the wall, his weights confiscated as well as his records and music system. Greg writes: "Basically, they are saying, 'Sell out and you can have your stuff back'... they're kind of saying listening to alternative music, wearing different clothes and being into civil rights is an illness that has to be conditioned out of you."

Greg is asking for letters of support to be sent to him at Millerbank, 27 Carlton Road, Burnley, Lancs BB11 4JE.

You can write to the manager of Millerbank, Mr Ian Millerin, at same address, asking him to restore Greg's privileges. You can write to his doctor asking him not to resection Greg, and asking him to reduce or stop medication and give Greg permission to leave the residential home and get his own flat: Dr MA Launer, Lamont Clinic, Burnley General Hospital, Casterton Avenue, Burnley, Lancs BB10 2PQ.

Stormy Petrel pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's *Anarchism and Violence*, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from ACF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

Coming next: *The Italian Factory Councils 1920-21.*

ANARCHIST ABC BLACK CROSS

Abolish crime. Abolish prison.

Books to prisoners

ESTABLISHED IN 1996, Haven Distribution has been supplying free educational literature to prisoners in the UK. If you are in prison and would like a copy of their catalogue, send a second class stamp to the address below.

The distribution exists on a shoestring budget and is voluntarily run. It is an essential service for prisoners. If you can afford a donation or a monthly standing order it would be appreciated.

Cheques/postal orders to: Haven Distribution, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3XX.

J18 prisoners

Kuldip Bajwa

ON 7 FEBRUARY, Judge Bathurst-Norman sentenced Kuldip Bajwa to 21 months imprisonment for his vigorous defence of the J18 Carnival Against Capitalism when it was attacked by heavily tooled-up riot police. The judge admitted making an example of him because "he encouraged others" to resist. Undoubtedly the racist police specially targetted Kuldip because he is Asian.

You can write to Kuldip or send him publications at: Kuldip Bajwa, DN 7230, HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, Brixton, London SW2 5XF. Donations to his campaign can be sent to: Kuldip Bajwa Political Prisoner, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

Onofrio LoVerso

ONOFRIO LOVERSO got 12 months for violent disorder at J18 on 29th September 1999. You can write (especially in Italian) to: Onofrio LoVerso-TC 3014, HMP YOI, Remand Centre, Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4ND.

The police have published a 'rogue's gallery' of 150 activists involved in J18 and have so far arrested 70. This shows the concern of the State in repressing any movement against global capitalism. Since then, they have filmed demonstrations and spied on hundreds of meetings.

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

Counter Information. Quarterly newsheet produced by independent collective. Information on struggle worldwide. Free copy with SAE from Pigeonhole CI, c/o Transmission, 28 King Street, Glasgow, G1 5QP, Scotland.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Out again!

The Anarchist Movement in Japan. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. The AF have reprinted this popular ACE pamphlet. £1.80 plus SAE from AF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

AF joins the International of Anarchist Federations

THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION has been accepted as the British affiliate to the International of Anarchist Federations/l'Internationale des Fédérations Anarchistes (IFA).

The IFA was created at the international anarchist congress which took place in Carrara, Italy, between August 31st and September 5th, 1968. A previous congress held in London in 1958, had set the ball rolling to create an anarchist international; and reaffirmed the desirability of international organisation, which traced back to Amsterdam in 1907. Unfortunately, despite this initial involvement from London, there has, until now, been no British affiliate.

The 6th and most recent congress of the IFA took place in France in 1997. It was attended by delegates from some 15 countries and four continents, including a delegation sent by ourselves.

The IFA is concerned with building international relations: to build a co-ordinated global movement; to increase solidarity and activity; and to spread information and resources as widely as possible. Obviously, these are giant ambitions and much work will be needed to achieve even some of them. The AF is committed to the ideals of internationalism, and there is of course, no alternative to global resistance if we are to begin to challenge the domination of capital. It was therefore felt that our aims were compatible and that our affiliation would be of mutual benefit.

Logo of the International of Anarchist Federations

The IFA now has sections in Argentina (FLA); Britain (AF); Bulgaria (FAB); France, Belgium and Luxembourg (FAF); Germany (i-AFD); Italy (FAI), Spain and Portugal (FAI).

Letters

Dear *Organise!*

Revolutionary greetings to you from the center of fascist oppression – the gulag state of Texas.

I recently obtained a copy of issue 52 of *Organise!* from a fellow anarchist here at the Walls Unit. Your article 'Confusion over Kosovo' was refreshing to read after seeing so many other convoluted sectarian rants in so-called revolutionary publications.

I agree wholeheartedly that anarchists must not be duped into siding with nationalistic self-determination movements, no matter how despicable the other side may be. Such movements work in opposition to international working class solidarity and must be avoided like the plague that they are. To rephrase a quote by Simone Weil: "Whether the mask is labelled KLA or Serbian fascism, our adversary remains the apparatus – the bureaucracy, the police, the military."

To take sides in such conflict (other than the side of revolutionary class struggle) is to fall prey to the old capitalist scheme of divide-and-conquer. We as revolutionary anarchists must separate ourselves from the din of confusion over such matters and hold firm to an internationalist perspective that opposes all forms of authoritarianism, whether left or right.

The position of "No War but the Class War" is a cop-out only to those people who have not yet thrown off the shackles of the nationalist mindset. We still have much work to do in educating the working class as to where their interests should really lie. World revolution without boundaries must be our undivided focus, educating the working class to move beyond their petty tribal conflicts, which only help fuel capitalist imperialism. Thanks for standing firm and getting it right.

You may also be interested to know that several of us revolutionary-minded prisoners have begun publishing a revolutionary zine called *Chain Reaction*. It's geared mostly towards raising political consciousness in prisoners and brings together prisoners from both the anarchist-communists and libertarian socialists. Copies are being distributed through South Chicago ABC Zine Distro and Claustrophobia Collective in Baltimore. I think another distro in New York is also distributing copies. We are looking to work together with other anarchist and libertarian socialist autonomous groups. Though our focus is generally on Texas prisoners we are internationalists who oppose all artificial frontiers.

Good revolutionary anarchist material is not always easy to come by in this part of the world. I would appreciate any offerings appreciate any offerings of literature you could send this way.

If you would be interested in receiving a copy of *Chain Reaction* to see the kind of agitating we're doing, send $2 to South Chicago ABC Zine Distro, PO Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430 USA Request issue 2, it's the best.

We're hoping to sustain four issues a year if the support is there. Currently we're reaching approximately 200 prisoners. But with a prison population in Texas of 150,000 our circulation is just scratching the surface. One thing about scratches, though, is they can end up infecting the whole body. That's our goal.

Keep up the agitating. I believe the moment for anarchism has arrived and we must seize the opportunity. Onward to the revolution! Let me hear from you

in solidarity
Ronald A Young,
Huntsville, Texas

Chain Reaction is also on the Internet at: www.worksintl.com/chain_reaction

Beyond Resistance – a Revolutionary Manifesto

New reprint of our pamphlet offering the AF's in-depth analysis of the capitalist world in crisis, suggestions about what the alternative Anarchist Communist society could be like, and evaluation of social and organisational forces which play a part in the revolutionary process.

A refreshing and stimulating new look at what's going on in the world. Everyone should read this document.

£2 plus p&p from ACF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

***Essays Against the Megamachine*, David Watson, Autonomedia, 327pp**

For over 30 years now the Detroit-based journal *The Fifth Estate* has been at the cutting-edge of North American radical politics. Originally conceived as a liberal, occasionally leftist, project, it quickly adopted a more anarchist stance towards the end of the sixties in response to a world-wide upsurge of interest in revolutionary politics.

Their anarchism always came with a critical edge to it, though, animated as it was not only by ongoing counter-cultural and ecological concerns, but also by a willingness to learn from other currents such as situationism and the writings of key ultra-leftists such as Jacques Camatte. By the early 80s, however, dissatisfaction with the explanatory depth of all such ideologies led the collective to declare that all the 'isms' were now 'wasms', and to begin a long period of political reassessment.

A key concern was the shared understanding that the present crisis wasn't just the outcome of economic relationships of capitalism *per se* but was rather the end result of a much wider and all-encompassing social system that predated capital by hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

Later labelling this system 'the Megamachine, attention was focused in particular on such areas as the role of work, the ideology of progress, the supposed neutrality of technology, and the nature of industrialism, an analysis of which quickly began to earn them as many enemies on the Left as they had previously earned on the Right.

A developing interest in the lifeways of non-industrial and tribal peoples by way of contrast to the norms of contemporary society, also led many on the left to condemn them as hopeless romantics, thoughtlessly eulogising primitivism and denigrating all that was modern and rational.

A key figure in all of this was the writer and poet, David Watson, who, writing under the *nom de plume*, George Bradford, was the author of many of the lengthier polemics in the journal. *Essays Against the Megamachine*, published by Autonomedia is a recent collection of such essays and although only a few have been amended and updated, they remain just as fresh and relevant today as when they were first written.

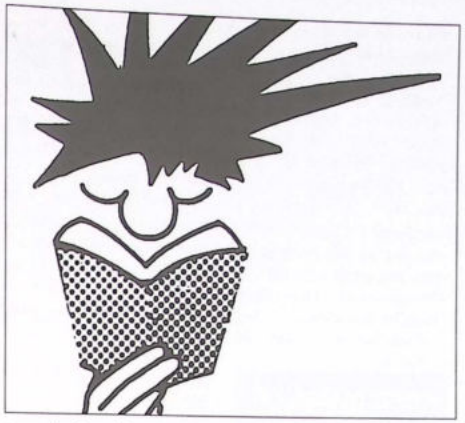
One of the first things that struck me on reading this anthology is how much common ground there really is between Watson and more traditional class-struggle anarchists, and that despite the attempts by Bookchin and others to depict him as some sort of starry-eyed new-age mystic. 'The fall of communism and the triumph of capital' is, for example, a well-written essay charting the demise of Bolshevism that draws extensively on the writings of, amongst others, libertarian socialist Paul Cardan (Castoriadis).

'Deep ecology and environmental philosophy' meanwhile, stands out as an effective rebuttal of the more reactionary arguments put out by this sometimes quite dangerous school of thought.

'Remarks on the 1992 election' is a passionate attack on the present state of mass politics in the United States, that would not look out of place in any anarchist pamphlet, whilst 'These are not our troops, this is not our country' is a Chomsky-like analysis of the Gulf war conflict as it occurred.

Finally, 'Looking back on the Vietnam War' sees Watson writing in a more personal vein, recounting both his youthful experiences as an NLF flag-waving militant and at the same time angrily exposing the whole series of myths that have grown up around the conflict.

Predictably enough, Watson enters more controversial territory when he critiques technology and industrialism in such essays as 'Against the megamachine and civilisation' v. 'Buck: empire is ecological destruction'.



Most class-struggle anarchists will find much of his anti-technological analysis hard to swallow. The whole question of how to situate technology within the larger context of capital remaining as unresolved as ever. Likewise, Watson's largely anthropological analysis of the emergence of political coercion and economic exploitation in human society will also be problematic for many, failing as it does to assign any really important role to capitalism itself.

That said, the arguments put forward do manage to shatter any myths about 'primitivism' being simplistic and one-dimensional in its outlook, Watson's ability to avoid caricature being particularly welcome here.

Not all of the essays are of the same high quality though. 'Anarchy and the sacred' stands out as a disappointing reprint of a debate that emerged in the US anarchist scene in which Watson's attack on "instrumental rationality" in general, and died-in-the-wool atheists in particular, led him to embrace some sort of reconstituted paganism. The essay 'Insurgent Mexico: redefining revolution and progress in the 21st century' also has a strange sort of confused quality to it, all the more so for his comment that he hopes the malnourished peasants of the Zapatistas will be fighting less for 'things' and more for 'being'!!

In addition, it is sometimes too easy to be swept away by the sheer power and vivid imagery of Watson's language, his skills as a poet no doubt coming into play here. On reflection, I couldn't help but feel that one of the critical shortcomings to much of the writing is that it carries with it a certain vagueness, so that anyone looking for definite answers to societal problems will be inevitably disappointed (something which, incidentally, the author admits to with disarming humility).

All in all, though, the collection is certainly worth a read, particularly if you haven't come across *The Fifth Estate* before. Watson emerges throughout as an intelligent, likeable, and committed activist, and as someone open to new ideas and debate. An important and dissenting voice, he deserves to be heard.

***Organise!* index**

A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues 14-43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

***Do or Die*, number 8, 344pp, £3.60**

DoD is an occasional theoretical/discussion magazine produced by a collective of activists involved in Earth First! The latest issue is bigger than ever – at 344 pages it's over twice the size of the last one, useful for building up those arm muscles for the next direct action, as well as stimulating the grey matter!

There are articles on subjects ranging from J18, to pirate utopias, and patriachy to animal resistance, as well as squatting, bio-diversity, ecological restoration, etc. The 'Other islands' section includes Bougainville, Swedish hunt sabbing, revolutionary footballers in Mexico, and Native American resistance. There are also reviews, letters and contacts, and plenty of good photos and graphics throughout.

Particularly recommended is the analysis of globalisation, which looks at its origins and resistance to it. It points out that globalisation is not new (although it is taking new forms); capitalism has always been global. Similarly the article criticises the popular idea that 'poor' countries, such as Brazil and India, are exploited by 'rich' countries, such as Britain, America, etc. It is the poor people in such 'third world' countries who are exploited by both their own rich élites, and foreign, 'first world' ones.

The 'Open letter to the UK direct action movement' is also important. It is an honest appraisal of why there was no opposition to the bombing of former Yugoslavia. It suggests that this is partly due to the 'moral liberalism' of much the direct action movement, which is due to most people in it being on the dole, and so making personal, moral decisions about which issues to campaign on, rather than the collective decisions those in waged work make 'of necessity' regarding fights over pay, conditions, etc. Although the decision to target finance capital through the J18 action showed an advance in the movement's understanding of the capitalist beast, ignoring a European War shows there is still a long way to go (and the rest of us should not be excluded from these criticisms either, as the failure to build an effective anti-war movement was ours too).

Do or Die, c/o 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton,East Sussex, BN2 2GY, UK.
E-mail: doordtp@yahoo.co.uk

FRED CHARLES

Continued from back page

frame-up. It was here in 1896 that Carpenter brought the sad news of the death of William Morris to Fred, who burst into tears.

After his release from jail in 1899 Fred went back to Norwich, where he married a fellow anarchist and schoolteacher. By 1913 he was in Oxford where he and his wife Charlotte translated and published the book *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution* by the anarchosyndicalists Pouget and Pataud during the great industrial unrest of this time. He was also involved in the setting up of a Building Workers cooperative with over a hundred members.

After the Ruskin College strike of 1909, Fred served on the management committee of the new college as a member of the Oxford Cooperative Society, acting as a lecturer and tutor in industrial and political history until mid-1911.

In the 1930s he retired to the anarchist colony in Whiteway, Gloucestershire, where he died. (There are photos of Fred, sporting a large, white walrus moustache, standing in front of one of the houses he had helped build at Whiteway.)

In his life Fred had become involved in practically every aspect of the socialist, anarchist and workers' movements. His enthusiasm and activism should be an example to us all.

***Twenty Year Millenium Wildcat. Anarchist comics by Donald Rooum.* Freedom Press, 48pp, £1.95**

Donald Rooum's cartoon in the anarchist fortnightly *Freedom* are often the best thing in it. Direct and hardhitting, they tear info the hypocrisy, cant and bullshit of politicians, cops and bosses.

Particularly good is the assault on the right to work peddled by various Trots, whilst Robin Cook's various manoeuvres about arms dealing also receive effective treatment. Also very apt are the frames on the Balkan wars. We could have done without the gratuitous cartoons about a stout anarchist rat, however.

The book celebrates 20 years of Rouum's cartoons in Freedom. Also available are other collections: *Wildcat ABC of Bosses, Health Service Wildcat* and two others.

***The Social Gene and the Survival of the Fit Enough – Evolution and Anarchism* By Richard Frost 149pp, £8**

Considering that so few people understand the basic ideas of anarchism, surprisingly few books set out to explain these basics to those who are interested. Of the books that do exist, most are decades old, leading inevitably to some degree of dating as events have overtaken them.

So, here we have a book which sets out to do just that, while at the same time adopting some original tactics to put across the message. The book is written as a prose poem, thus avoiding falling into the trap of becoming turgid political dogma. It also works amazingly well in clarifying the arguments, so that they come across clearly-defined.

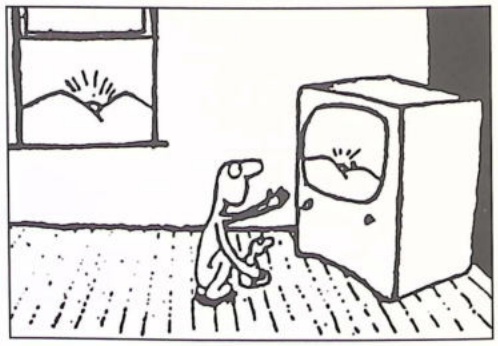
It is not a book of tactics and strategy, nor a comparison of this type of anarchism against that type. That's all left for the converted to mull over elsewhere. This is simply a call to arms, directed to everyone!

The fundamental argument of the book is that humans are a social animal, and that we develop through co-operation. It therefore makes obvious sense to organise our society to maximise our potential to co-operate: ie anarchism. In fact, anything else is self-destructive, as can be seen from evidence all around us.

By way of arguing this, the 'selfish gene' theorists and their biological justifications for exploitation and the rule of capital are roundly trashed, and not before time!

The book is convincing enough to leave you wondering how anyone could be daft enough not to be an anarchist! This is one for your doubting friends, or an easy way to restore your faith in those moments of despair. Probably unlikely to make it onto the National Curriculum, unfortunately.

Copies can be obtained via AF. (Unnamed cheques, PO's, etc.)



AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1 The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people, may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce.

The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow.

Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale.

An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process.

We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

£1,000 PRESS FUND APPEAL

KEN 'BOMBER' LIVINGSTONE got a bung of £200,000 from that great socialist Chris Evans for his election campaign. The premier purveyor of pucrile and prurient pap won't be handing any folding money over to us.

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We're bringing out *Resistance*, our monthly bulletin and have reached 13 issues. We're reprinting our pamphlets *Basic Bakunin*, *Against Parliament*, and our *Manifesto*. We've done a 10,000 reprint of our popular stickers. We've increased the numbers of pages in *Organise!*

All of this needs money! So, please send whatever you can. Please make cheques, postal orders, IMOs for Press Fund payable to 'AF'.

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As you can see we're only halfway there. If any of you can afford anything even if it's only 50p please rush it to us. Try to make it so that next issue we can announce that we've reached our target!

Any standing orders need to be changed from our old account. Please contact us at London address. The same for people who would like to start up standing orders.

Fred Charles

Organise! continues its series revolutionary portraits, devoted to revolutionaries – some well known, some obscure – who have contributed so much to our movement over the last 120 years.

FREDERICK CHARLES SLAUGHTER was a leading light within the very active Norwich branch of the Socialist League in the 1880s. The Socialist League was a revolutionary socialist organisation that had broken with Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation, some because of their dislike of the autocratic Hyndman, some because of their dislike of Hyndman and his politics.

When the Socialist League brought out its Manifesto in 1885 the socialists in Norwich enthusiastically welcomed it and set up a branch. Fred was instrumental in this. His small income enabled him to run a café as a centre for the movement. In early 1885 he set up the Norwich Pioneer Class for the Discussion of Socialism. Eleven people were recruited from this to help him found a branch. William Morris visited the branch to give it a boost, as did the tailoring worker Charles Mowbray from London and Fred Henderson from Bradford.

The Leaguers carried their propaganda into the countryside. Travelling six miles along bad roads in all kinds of weather to the village of St Faith's where an enthusiastic crowd was ready to hear about revolutionary ideas and set up a new branch. Fred and the other Leaguers drove hard for working class support and were deeply involved in agitation among the unemployed. By Easter 1886, the branch was drawing audiences of 1,000 to its open air meetings in the Market Place and its membership rose rapidly. By 1887 Fred, who had dropped his last name, had developed explicitly Anarchist Communist views alongside Mowbray and David Nicoll.

The Battle of Ham Run

This was a time of high unemployment and on Friday 14th November 1887, 500 unemployed rioted after attending a meeting addressed by Mowbray and Henderson (then an Anarchist Communist who ended up as a Labour Mayor!). The "insulting tone of the Mayor, the unconcealed contempt for their fellows on the part of the councillors and aldermen... angered the crowd and they broke away". The mansions of the rich were attacked and their windows smashed. Shops were looted and the incident became known as the Battle of Ham Run after the evidence of a police constable who testified to a looted ham being "run over" – handed back over – the heads of the crowd. For this, Mowbray and Henderson were sentenced to nine months and four months respectively on the treadmill of Norwich Castle prison.

League membership rose to 200 in Norwich, a fifth of total membership. Fred, though , seems to have been forced by local repression to leave Norwich, turning up in East London in early 1888 where he carried out mass propaganda alongside the old anti-parliamentary communist Joe Lane. They set up the East End Socialist Propaganda Committee with the support of local Socialist League Clubs and the foreign anarchist clubs: "commencing a systematic distribution from house to house... of leaflets, pamphlets... and other literature, as well as pasting up leaflets, bills, etc... they have besides commenced holding regular open-air meetings at about 20 places in the district". They exceeded this by establishing 27 pitches, although they had overextended themselves and the agitation eventually ground to a halt.

Fred, "out of employment and in a desperate mood" was forced to go to Sheffield to obtain work. Here, with Doctor John Creaghe (who was to spend much of his later life as an active member of the Argentinian anarchist movement), he set up the paper the *Sheffield Anarchist* in 1891 – eight issues being published over four months, attracting prosecutions from the first issue.

Reminiscing about these days, Creaghe was to later write: "I cannot forget the time that Charles, who was then out of work, started with me the first number of the *Sheffield Anarchist*. He would do nothing for himself. If his chances of getting a £1,000 depended on his keeping an appointment, I am certain he would not be there and I am astonished how actively and steadily he worked for the cause he loved. I cannot say how often I regretted it when he had to leave me, for we spent some happy hours in that anything but sweet smelling den which served us as a club and office... How we laughed as we scribbled and enjoyed in anticipation the horror and rage of the enemy."

Indeed, Fred was remarkable for his generosity – most of his disposable income being given to tramps and beggars. He had been known to take off his coat and pawn it so he could give money to a fellow worker without money. The East End anarchist Ted Leggatt, who organised among the cart drivers, wrote that he had seen him "take his best boots off his feet and the last half crown out of his pocket and give them to a man he had never seen before..."

Another anarchist, David Nicoll, editor of the League paper *Commonweal*, remarked that "I, who knew him well, have often thought that Charles, Atheist and Anarchist as he was, had more of the spirit of Christ about him than those who talk so loudly of their Christianity".

The Sheffield socialist, poet and advocate of homosexual freedom, Edward Carpenter, wrote that he was: "one of the most devoted workers. No surrender or sacrifice for the 'Cause' was too great for him; and as to his own earnings or possessions, he practically gave them all away to tramps or the unemployed."

The Walsall Anarchist Trial

Fred's failure to get a job in Sheffield forced him to move to Walsall where he obtained work in an iron foundry. Here he was caught up in provocation instigated by a French police agent. He and other local anarchists were arrested and charged with bomb manufacture in 1892.

At the trial, Fred said openly that it was all a police plot and that he thought the bombs were intended for use in tsarist Russia. When he found out that they were not, he washed his hands of the matter. This did not stop him getting a sentence of ten years of which he served seven and a half. One of the police inspectors involved admitted later in his memoirs that the whole affair had been a provocation and

Continued on page 30

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ORGANISE!

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

Issue 54
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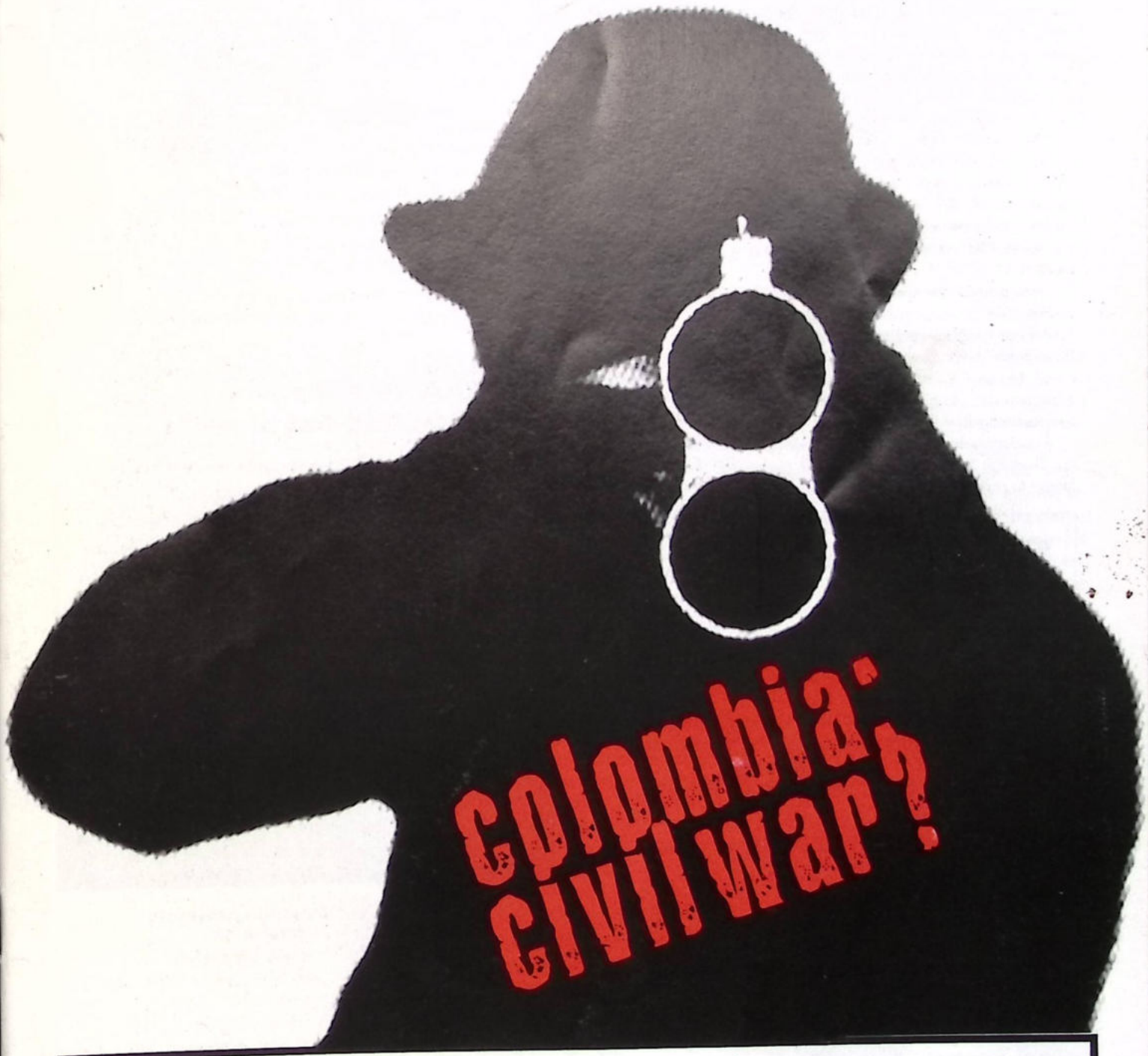

colombia: civil war?

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MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

ORGANISE! IS THE magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published twice a year in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to eventually publish any article that falls within the political scope of our Aims and Principles. Having said that, even agreeing with our A&Ps still leaves much open to debate. The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective view of the Anarchist Federation. Indeed, some of them have provoked considerable discussion within the editorial group. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The majority of the articles in this issue are written by members of the AF. However, once again, we have been fortunate enough to be able to publish a major article (on Colombia this time) by someone outside the AF. We hope that others will take the opportunity to contribute articles that meet the broad editorial objectives of *Organise!* If you would like to contribute, but are unsure how to do so, then get in touch first.

Deadlines for the next issue are: articles 14 Feb 2001 and letters 21 Feb 2001.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if articles could be sent either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles and letters can be emailed to us at: anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com.

Regular readers will note that the planned article in the series, 'In the Tradition', has not appeared. The author felt the need to have longer to research the article. It will appear in the next issue.

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You can also E-Mail us at anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

Back issues

BACK ISSUES are available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE. Issues 1-26, 28, 30-36, 41 and 42 are sold out.

Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X.
Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise.
Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.
Issue 38: Militarism; Myth of overpopulation; Castro.
Issue 39: Prisons; Algeria; Heritage.
Issue 40: Work; Job Seekers Allowance; Art as a Weapon.
Issue 43: Green politics; Raving; Road activists.
Issue 44: Underclass; Surrealism; Eco-Fascism.
Issue 45: Albania; Ecology; Industry; Voting.
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin; Syndicalism.
Issue 48: French Unemployed, Haile Selassie, Revolutionary Unions?
Issue 49: Mental illness and social control; Bradford 98.
Issue 50: Land; Italian anarchists; Abortion; Ireland.
Issue 51: GM foods; Who owns the land?
Issue 52: Kosovo; East Timor; Roots of our movement.

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

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Columbia — a libertarian perspective

This fascinating article, written by a Colombian anarchist, tells the story of Colombia's violent history, up to the present day. It examines the reasons and implications of its government's new 'Plan Colombia' sponsored by the US and EU, which can only bring more misery in terms of a new arms race in the region and increased exploitation of the population. It explains the differing positions of the guerrilla and paramilitary groups including their relation to drug-dealing, and the activities of civil and indigenous opposition movements. It concludes with reports of opposition by anarchists and other anti-militarist activists, and a call for your help in spreading the libertarian message in the face of a strong Marxist-Leninist tradition.

Historical review

THE SITUATION OF WAR through which Colombia is currently passing isn't new. It's been present since the independence wars (1810-1819). At first it was between federalists and centralists, then between liberals and conservatives, the most important political parties in the country. From this situation originated several internal wars, the most recent of which started on 9 April 1948 with the killing of the liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan.

This killing unleashed a civil war which lasted for a decade or so, known simply as '*La Violencia*' (The Violence). The main difference between liberals and conservatives was their positions towards clericalism, making the liberal party the most radical option because they openly expressed their anti-clericalism in a country with a deep catholic tradition. The church, one of Colombia's most important political forces, aligned itself with the conservatives and got to the point that they would even preach "Killing is a sin but killing liberals isn't" and played an active role in war.

La Violencia reached one of its peaks in 1953 when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla launched a *coup d'état* to 'pacify' the country, and it came to an end in 1958 when the treaty known as '*El Frente Nacional*' (The National Front) was signed. In this treaty both parties agreed to take turns in power, a situation that lasted until 1978, when a liberal (Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala) was elected president after another liberal presidency (Alfonso Lopez Michelsen). By that time the differences between liberals and conservatives had practically disappeared.

The signing of this treaty resulted in the breakaway of the most radical elements within the liberal party, and led them to look towards Marxist doctrines, which were fashionable due to the influence of the Cuban revolution.

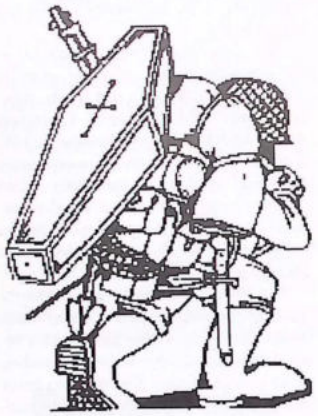
At the beginning of the 1960s, several communist experiments were born, among them the commune which became known as 'Marquetalia' in the central part of Colombia. This commune was bombed and destroyed by the army in alliance with the US army (in what is known as the LASO operation). The very few survivors of this massacre, among whom was Manuel Marulanda Velez aka 'Tirofijo' (Sureshot), funded what was later to be known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). These 'guerrillas' would later declare war on the government – a war that has yet to end.

The destruction of the commune led to the formation of several other guerrilla groups. Among the ones that can be mentioned are: ELN (National Liberation Army), M19 (April 19th Movement), EPL (Popular Liberation Army), a co-ordination they tried to form in the 1980s called CGSB (Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Co-ordinator), and Quintin Lame (named after an indigenous outlaw, this was an indigenous guerrilla group).

The 'Dirty war' was crude, seriously weakening several of these groups, which would enter peace talks and return ('re-insert' themselves) into civilian life, ending up as political parties. One of these peace talks, in the mid-80s, caused the re-insertion of M19, that would then become the 'M19 Democratic Alliance', and of certain sides of FARC, which would become the Patriotic Union (UP). Later, 'paramilitary' groups [Ed. note: The term guerrilla is reserved for the left-wing] would massacre

many of the militants of these groups, including M19's candidate (Carlos Pizarro Leon-Gomez) and two of UP's candidates (Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa and Jaime Pardo Leal), all of them running for president in 1990s elections. This massacre included over 3,000 militants of UP during the following decade, as well as hundreds of different labour unionists, students, teachers human rights, left-wing and social activists etc.

This situation, which blocked alternative routes to power for these groups (a central point in the Marxist-Leninist



discourse), intensified the war and took it to the point it is at today, the same point as when *El Frente Nacional* was signed, where what is being discussed is the share of power each group is going to have. There are two sides in struggle. Both are extremely militarist, both are convinced that they are capable of winning the war and both lack wide political support among the civilian population. For both, their expectation is instead a political leadership based on economic and military strength.

Drug trafficking and the current political situation

Drug trafficking first appeared in Colombia at the end of the 1970s, centred on the northern coast, with what they used to call '*Fiebre Marimbera*' (Weed Fever), focused on the growth and distribution of marijuana. It also generated the first US intervention with the introduction of 'Paraquat', a pesticide intended to eliminate illegal crops. Its consequence, as with subsequent experiments in the Colombian countryside, was a huge ecological disaster in the fumigated areas, harming the health of the inhabitants of the area and destroying legal crops essential to economic activity.

At the end of the 1970s the first cocaine exports occurred (mainly for the US market), and the most important distribution networks were created, which would later give birth to the drug cartels. Medellin Cartel was the most important one of all. It had its headquarters in the medium Magdalena River, where the two main barons, Pablo Escobar aka '*El Patron*' and Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha aka '*El Mexicano*', had their fortresses. The first baron was the brains of the operations and was in charge of the '*sicario*' (paid assassins) schools, security in the cities, and the logistics of the distribution networks. The second was in charge of the security of the operations in the countryside since he was in command of the paramilitary groups in the area. Rodriguez Gacha had links with another member of the cartel: Fidel Castano, aka 'Rambo', also a radical anti-communist who started organising paramilitary groups in the areas of Cordoba and Uraba, near the border with Panama on the north-western coast.

Castano's groups are the most important paramilitary groups in Colombia at this moment. Both Castano and Rodriguez Gacha developed operations that included hiring Israeli mercenaries, such as Yair Klein, for military training of their troops. They did this in association with important banana export corporations such as Uniban in Uraba, as well as with the support of rich cattlemen in the area. It all started as a retaliation against taxing by the guerrillas through '*vacuna*' (vaccine) which was a tax on cattle raising, and '*boleteo*' (ticketing) which was a tax on urban economic activities such as trade. Other continual attacks from the guerrillas included kidnapping (in fact Rambo's father was kidnapped and, after paying the requested ransom, his family only got back a corpse), and other forms of blackmail. Important *sicarios* were trained in the paramilitary camps. They would later train others in the *sicario* schools of the cities, mainly Medellin.

Not least, paramilitary activity has always been linked to drug dealing and trafficking. The biggest plantations and laboratories are located in the southern part of the country, in the middle of the jungle where they were almost impossible to detect. Since the opposing guerrillas have traditionally had a very strong control of these areas, they tax illegal crops as they do other economic activity in the area. In fact, the guerrilla link with drug dealing is more related to taxation than to the actual trafficking. Their direct involvement in trafficking has never been actually proved, although it is they, rather than the paramilitaries, who are always referred to as 'Narcoguerrillas' or 'Narcoterrorists', even though some paramilitaries have publicly accepted their links with drug trafficking (Carlos Castano, current commander of the AUC – united self-defence groups of Colombia – the biggest paramilitary group in Colombia, accepted it on a televised interview some months ago).

The legal army of Colombia, as well as the government, have also had several scandals that link them to drug-dealing activities. One example of this was when the previous government (under Ernesto Samper) had really difficult relations with the US due to scandals surrounding the economic support it had received from Cali's cartel during its campaign. This even led the US government to withdraw the Colombian president's US visa, along with those of six, three-sun generals (the highest rank in the Colombian military) on the grounds that they were related to drug trafficking activities. Another example was when several shipments of heroin were found on planes of the air force, such that the media named them the 'Blue Cartel' after the colour of their uniform.

> Drug dealing is one of the few really profitable economic activities in Colombia.

It is also important to mention that drug dealing is one of few really profitable economic activities in Colombia [Ed. note: The others are oil and fruit]. Therefore, it is central to the resources which are fuelling the current arms race of the legal and illegal forces in Colombia.

Peace talks

Recently, peace talks with FARC have been taking place in the southern 'demilitarised' area of San Vicente Del Caguan. The reality is that the so-called demilitarisation of this area is more of a smoke screen because FARC has traditionally had complete control over this area (which is the size of Switzerland but very poorly populated as it in the middle of the jungle), and the state and its military have never had a very active

presence. The situation is so extreme that people who have lived in the area say that when there's a legal argument about land, for example, that it won't be solved by a police inspector, a judge or a lawyer, but by a guerrilla.

The main points being discussed are, from the FARC's side, the complete dismantling of paramilitary groups by the government, as well as a complete change in the economic policies of privatisation of public companies that follow a neoliberal model. They suggest instead the implementation of a systematic nationalisation of all the resources and companies in charge of managing them. The government insist on the guerrillas stopping kidnappings and taxation of economic activities, and reaching a cease-fire treaty. This is with the idea of improving the conditions for foreign investment and obtaining credit from international financial institutions.

The government was traditionally using double-speak when referring to the guerrilla groups. When they talked about FARC they tended to talk about dialogue and about the need for a 'political negotiation'. When they talked about ELN, they talked about the need of force to stop 'terrorist activities' and the state's reluctance to bow to 'armed blackmail'. However, ELN started a bombing campaign against the electrical power infrastructure of the most important provinces of Colombia (blowing up between 10 and 30 pylon towers a day) which led the state to reconsider their policies. Pre-talks were started that considered the ELN's request that three towns be demilitarised to start the actual peace talks. This has generated a strong opposition in those areas, which is a mixture of popular discontent and paramilitary pressure.

Development model

The government has been imposing a series of both political and economic policies of a neoliberal nature. These are aimed at the privatisation of state resources based on the argument of a lack of efficiency of the institutions in charge of the administration of these resources on the one hand, and the supposed efficiency and transparency of

private organisations on the other. All this departs from a lineal and economicist model of development, which doesn't take into account any variables other than productivity. The model requires the modernisation of the infrastructure of the country, which includes dry ports, airports, river and sea harbours, the building of new highways and the modernisation of those now existing, and the optimisation of the conditions for foreign investment in the country.

Since guerrillas oppose these policies based on their anti-imperialist discourse, which gives arguments to their aspirations of national liberation, they also oppose foreign investment and they have been systematically sabotaging these governmental policies. The army can't efficiently fight them due to their mobile nature, and there is strong pressure from human rights activists against its continual violations. So the army has had to lean more and more frequently on paramilitary groups that act as a cover to develop operations they wouldn't be able to do as the 'National Army' – such as massacres of supposed supporters or sympathisers of the guerrillas. This helps the army displace thousands of peasants from these areas, so that the government can sell their lands for peanuts – to the multinationals, or to the state for their huge projects intended to modernise the infrastructure, or to paramilitaries for drug-dealing operations. 'Pacifying' the lands that were previously controlled by the guerrillas means the return of economic activity to these areas, which is always profitable for landowners (many whom are themselves paramilitaries).

Continuous fighting in certain areas of the country is always linked to certain centres of economic activity. In Uraba, for example, it has to do with the project of building another canal between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans along the Atrato River, now that the US is losing control over the Panama canal. It also has to do with the modernisation of the Turbo harbour, essential for the banana export activity, considered a priority in the Caribbean coast. Besides this, being so close to the Panama Canal provides a privileged situation when it comes to drug or arms trafficking. In Santander, in the north-eastern part of Colombia, paramilitary activity has to do with oil exploitation by multinationals such as BP and Oxy. It has traditionally been boycotted and sabotaged by ELN, which has the harbour of Barrancabermeja as one of its biggest fortresses, and this is in turn currently another big centre of paramilitary activity. In Valle del Cauca, paramilitary activity has much to do with the strong

> The army has to lean more and more frequently on paramilitary groups.

presence of guerrillas in the surroundings of Buenaventura, the main harbour on the pacific coast, and around the highway that connects this city with Cali, the third major city after Bogota and Medellin.

Finally, it's important to mention the paradoxical effect of massive displacement (nearly 7% of the population). People migrate to big urban centres, stretching the shantytowns around these cities and worsening the situation of inequality that already exists. This could help take the war into an urban phase, one that the guerrillas have never been able to reach in more than 30 years of struggle, but now may help them regain the popular support they have been systematically losing. The paramilitaries are effectively helping the guerrilla groups gain this urban support, since they are mainly displacing those who they consider might be (or become) guerrilla supporters or sympathisers.

Plan Colombia

The government has developed Plan Colombia, with the idea of getting international support in their 'War on drugs'. This war centres on the 'Narcoguerrillas' or 'Narcoterrorists', therefore making evident their real goal – financing war on guerrillas – since they do not refer to other drug dealers, and they never mention connections between trafficking and the army, corrupt politicians and paramilitaries, even though it's been more than proved (or as we have seen, admitted) for ages.

The money that the government is asking for is US $1.7 billion for the next two years. The US congress has already approved the giving of US $1.3 billion and the national government is lobbying around the EU to get the rest. More than 70% of this money is destined for the modernisation of the army (the biggest violators of human rights in the Western Hemisphere), including the purchase of equipment. The rest of the money will be invested in things such as 'training on human rights' for the army, maybe in the 'School of Americas' where most Latin-American dictators have been trained by the US Army.

The direct effect of this plan will be the

revitalisation of the arms race within the conflict, because if the army gets US $1.3 billion in weapons and equipment, the guerrillas are likely to get another US $1.3 billion in weapons and equipment from their 'Revolutionary Taxes', kidnappings and their other 'economic activities'. On the other hand, this support will make the already deadly and systematic violation of human rights in the hands of the army a lot more efficient.

Another consequence of Plan Colombia is the increased impoverishment of the population as a result of the US government's economic support for improving the conditions for foreign investment and liberalisation of the market. This includes lower wages and fewer guarantees for workers, as well as lower taxes for multinationals, which means that even less money from local resources will stay in Colombia. It also includes worsening of living conditions for indigenous and black communities and other groups that oppose the neoliberal idea of development.

Alternative resistance

The current situation of war in Colombia and the everyday decreasing credibility of the guerrillas and their political programme have helped feed alternative movements of resistance. These come from the idea of civil unarmed resistance, and preach positions such as 'Civil Disobedience' as alternative strategies. Although they are generally reformist in nature, they have looked for creative ways to oppose official policies.

One example is the highway blockades in certain areas of the country. They have been used by disparate groups such as the U'wa and other indigenous groups, as well as those who oppose the demilitarisation of the three municipalities for the peace talks with ELN. They achieved the isolation of some province capitals for more than a month after blocking the Pan-American Highway in the south-western part of Colombia. They took Pasto (capital of the Narino province) and Popayan (capital of Cauca province) to critical moments when supply distribution was damaged, causing losses which led the government to sit down and talk things over with the organisers of the blockade.

The movement that opposes a demilitarised area for ELN isolated the northern coast of Colombia, causing a huge crisis for the cattle raising industry and for supply distribution in cities as important as Cartagena and Barranquilla (amongst the biggest eight cities of Colombia with millions of inhabitants).

> The indigenous movements have a huge tradition of resistance.

Another example is that of the NGO's who have been targeted by paramilitaries and who lost many of their militants over the last decade, resulting in their development of incredible networks of 'contra-information' that can now be used by radical activists.

On the other hand, the indigenous movements have a huge tradition of resistance. Quintin Lame, an indigenous person from Colombia, bears the record for the most times in prison in Colombia, due to his different activities of resistance, and an indigenous guerrilla group in the 1980s was named after him, as mentioned earlier. They were initially inspired by the Zapatistas in Mexico, then by the Mapuches in Chile, and finally by the indigenous movement in Ecuador, which brought down two presidents during the last 10 years, and continue to be strong and combative. The most important examples of this struggle are the U'was in the eastern part of Colombia and the Embera-Katio communities in Uraba, in the north-west. What is special about these movements is that they have opposed the official policies and their model of development without adopting the idea of anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles. On the contrary, they have also opposed the nationalist idea that homogenises and stops them from affirming their traditions and beliefs within a state that excludes them from its social and economic policies. They have chosen to declare absolute independence from the programmes preached by both the guerrillas and the state. This has gained them enemies on both sides. On the other hand, the fact that they use different resistance techniques and categories from those of the guerrillas has helped crack their already worn-out discourse.

Apart from these movements, it's important to mention the appearance of anarchist groups within the underground scene of the cities during the last decade. Initially some looked more like a copy of the anarcho-punk movement in Britain and the Radical Rock movement in the Basque Country in the 1980s. More recently they have created a more authentic identity, basically through the interchange of ideas with other groups in Latin America, especially Venezuela and Mexico. They have now begun to put their struggle in a more realistic context within the Colombian reality.

In Medellin, 'Caminos', maybe the first anarchist collective in the city, reached a peak in 1992 within the resistance movement against the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the so-called discovery of America. Then came TURRA, some kind of a RASH (Red and Anarchist Skinheads) section in Medellin. Its main source of militants was both the punk and the skinhead movements in the city. It formed as a broad collective that included both Marxist and anarchist militants. It eventually broke up because the ideological differences between anarchists and certain Marxist groups (Leninists and Maoists) were impossible to reconcile as they were creating a sensation of incoherence within the group.

Then came the 'Jose Maria Vargas Vila' propaganda, study and discussion group, named after a radical liberal writer of the 1940s. This group attended the libertarian meeting to commemorate 30 years of May 1968, in Bogota, organised by 'Alas De Xue' – maybe the best known anarchist group from Colombia at an international level (though they are really small and not very active in Bogota). Alas De Xue formed in the 1980s, and published a couple of books and used to publish the *Biofilos* newspaper. There is another group in Bogota, more of an insurrectional nature, called '*Anarquistas al Combate*' (Anarchists into Combat), who used to be very active in public universities in Bogota but are now a lot weaker, although they still exist.

Currently, in Medellin, most groups are linked to the anarcho-punk movement, which is very influenced by the Mexican anarcho-punk movement linked to the Zapatista struggle. Examples of such groups are '*La Sombra*' and CASO (Anarchist Collective for workers' solidarity), even though the latter has strong connections with the anarcho-punk movement in Medellin, they have tried to reach a much broader population.

All these groups, plus the SHARP (Skin-Heads Against Racial Prejudice) section of Medellin, another collective called Red Juvenil (youth network) and some autonomous individuals, are part of a project called '*Antimilitarismo Sonoro*' (Sounding Antimilitarism) which is probably the biggest autonomous project in Medellin and, perhaps, in Colombia. This collective aims to organise propaganda activities aimed at promoting conscientious objection to military conscription (which is illegal in Colombia at this moment) and against police brutality from an antimilitarist position. The hierarchical and authoritarian structure of any army and thus of all the armed actors of the Colombian conflict: Colombian army, police, paramilitaries and guerrillas, is challenged.

The idea has been from the beginning to establish a clear position and to break from the traditional discourse of the left (armed and legal) of a very strong Marxist-Leninist tradition, looking for new and creative ways to carry out propaganda activities, such as cultural activities within the independent music scene in the city. Several concerts have been put together by the collective, the biggest of which took place last year with two bands from Argentina (Todos Tus Muertos and Lumumba) and two local bands (Niquitown and Sociedad FB7). Between 8,000 and 10,000 people attended this free concert in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city even though there was a boycott of the event by the mass media. Many goals were achieved by this concert, specifically by more collectives getting involved in the project. It was mostly organised by Red Juvenil and some individuals, but there were four collectives involved in the following concert and there should be even more in the next one.

Another concert was organised on 13 May 2000 to commemorate the international day against military conscription. Only local underground bands played, but some 3,000 people attended. The bands that played that day were Rechazo (punk), Beto el Recluta (ska and reggae), Lo que Queda (punk), Laberinto (hip hop), Tribu Omerta (hip hop) and Rulaz Plazko (hip hop).

Future plans for this year include a compilation CD and antimilitarist book that will include bands from all over the Spanish speaking world and some from other parts, for example Robb Johnson from the UK. We are also thinking about our next concert. We plan to get Fermin Muguruza (well-known radical Basque musician) to play in Medellin, hopefully on 26 September, and to do some smaller benefit concerts to help us become self-sufficient.

We have also been working with a group concerned with civil opposition to police brutality, involving propaganda against state policies to recover 'Public Space', which have affected thousands of street vendors and youths who have been brutalised in certain squares the police want to kick them out from. Some activities include sabotaging collective arrests from the inside by getting arrested and then, through a legal support network that has been built for both this and the anti-conscription groups, getting released with all the other people that have been illegally arrested. There is also a graphic arts collective working on a boycott against these policies. Other activities include publishing posters and leaflets with legal information in case of police harassment, mainly in relation to the amount and types of 'drugs' that can be carried according to the constitution. We're also working in high schools promoting conscientious objection to military conscription and our legal support groups that include several actual objectors.

Another important point in *Antimilitarismo Sonoro* is breaking away from state sponsored campaigns against the war that intend to blame it all on the guerrillas and do not take into account the role of the legal army and the paramilitary groups. That's why we are very clear about our opposition to any kind of army.

How to help us

The current plan is to get a second-hand sound system with a 16 or 24 channel mixer and at least 5,000 Watts of power to do our concerts and to be able to self-manage the project. People from different groups such as the AF and RTS all over the UK, the Rainbow Centre in Nottingham, the Autonomous Centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow have already expressed willingness to help with this, and any further suggestions are welcome at this email address: corleone69@hotmail.com, or this postal address (No name please): A.A. 54413, Medellin, Colombia, South America.

There have already been action and demonstrations against Plan Colombia in Britain – check the AF web-site News Diary and *Resistance* bulletin. Get further information from the Colombian Refugee Association (CORAS), 36 Vauxhall Street, London SE11, Tel: 0207 924 0647, Email: coras@refugio.fsnet.co.uk

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Humans and animals: To kill or not to kill

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS ANIMALS has been rightly challenged by a movement of activists, many of whom consider themselves anarchists. They have campaigned around a variety of issues including animal experiments, the fur trade, vegetarianism/veganism, endangered species and fox hunting. Many of these causes have found support from a wide-range of people, affecting lifestyles as well as opinions. We are beginning to realise that animals have their own claim to this planet, independent of their use to the human species. This political movement appeals to people's emotions. Most people love to see furry creatures and they can elicit soppiness from the most macho hard-man. It is also popular amongst urban dwellers because the only form of wildlife they might come across is the neighbour's rotweiler. The sighting of a fox or a kite, or even visiting ducks in a park, can give the resident of a concrete jungle a lot of pleasure. Naturally, people don't want to see these creatures hurt.

It has been the horror stories about the treatment of animals that has caused many to become vegetarians or vegans and to argue animal life should not be taken for the use of human beings. (There are, of course, other reasons for not eating meat eg land use and health risks). Killing of animals is 'morally wrong' and for some this is an absolute principle, just as some people are pacifists and hold to the belief that human life should never be taken, no matter what the circumstances.

It is very difficult when political issues enter the realm of morality and ethics. Such issues require us to ask, 'Why is it wrong?' and 'Who decides?' Anarchists have great difficulty with these questions because we have no doctrine from either the Christian or Leninist church to tell us what's right and wrong. Some issues are clear-cut, but many are not so clear and the answer of whether something is right or wrong often depends on the circumstances. However, these issues do need to be discussed and debated so that we can work out an anarchist ethics. In the case of killing animals, I would argue that it is not 'wrong'. It would be 'nicer' not to, but it is not a moral wrong.

As anarchists, we would agree that we want to create a society where animals have a respected place. The whole relationship between human and animal can be transformed, just as the relationships between people will be. However, will this mean that animals will cease to have any role in the satisfaction of human needs? Will they just hang around where they want and get on with their lives? Will humans never again have to kill an animal? Though I do not want to rule out this scenario, I do not think it is a realistic option. There are a number of contexts in which humans kill animals, including research using animals and factory farming, that are very dodgy and have been much discussed in many animal welfare publications as well as in our own Ecology pamphlet and Manifesto. In this article I will be looking at the killing of animals in the 'wild' and relating this to other issues such as conservation and land management and land ownership that have been discussed in the series on 'Land' in the past two issues of *Organise!*

> Animals have their own claim to this planet, independent of their use to the human species.

Wild animals as food

Human beings have been killing wild animals for food and other products very early on in their emergence as a species. Rituals and art forms developed around the theme of the hunt. Prehistoric rock paintings and carvings invariably feature the animals that are the hunter's prey. Domestication of animals and the advent of raised livestock have meant that hunting wild animals has been less important.

Capitalism has reinforced this with the profit-driven factory farming system where animals are force-fed, packed together and slaughtered on an assembly line. However, in some parts of the world, hunting is still the main way of obtaining a food source, as well as many other essential products. These traditional societies do not yet have access to Tesco's and other 'benefits' of global capitalism!

Also, even in western societies most people lived on the land until very recently. Killing deer, rabbits or fowl was an important way of supplementing a rather meagre diet. Puffins and fish were about the only things available to the inhabitants of the very bleak and barren St Kilda's island off the coast of Scotland.

Poaching has had a long tradition amongst the rural working class as a way of gaining some power. Food is power because without food people are at the mercy of the landowner. This is one reason why landowners have always cracked down on poaching; they don't want the people to have an independent source of food. If people had been able to shoot and fish on the private estates in Ireland and Scotland, the failure of potato crops would not have had such a devastating impact.

Bad design

Unfortunately, all life forms have to use other life forms for food, for shelter and for play. The mere fact that we exist means that other species have to die. Humans have been a particular problem because of our success in expanding our numbers. This fact, together with the development of exploitative economic systems and destructive technologies, has resulted in the loss of habitat for countless animals and other species. And loss of habitat means death. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't try and limit our impact (population control is an unpopular subject but needs to be addressed) but, unless we commit mass suicide as a species, we have to accept that our existence depends on the death of others on the planet. Therefore to kill an animal is not 'wrong' but unfortunately necessary. I have already mentioned examples where people either have to eat meat or starve. We could still limit our food consumption to the so-called lower life forms. But who decides what is higher and lower? And, then again the lower life forms aren't present on the Siberian tundra in winter! Isn't it preferable that people living in these difficult areas are able to provide their own food supplies rather than relying on imported vegetables? Even if we stopped eating meat, what about our beloved pets? It is uncertain whether or not we can turn all animals into vegetarians. People can at least choose to not eat meat, carnivores cannot. In addition, there are a number of people who actually like eating meat. There may be many things like rape and murder, racism and sexism that we would want to ban, but eating meat is still too morally contentious to be included in the proscribed activity list in an anarchist society. In our *Manifesto for the Millennium*, the question was deliberately left open.

However, certain principles should be adhered to when taking life. Firstly, the animal/bird/fish should not be endangered. In fact, we should take what we need from those animals that are maybe too abundant. In this country deer and rabbits are considered a threat to many other species and therefore would make the ideal source of meat. Secondly, the animal needs to be killed without cruelty. Those doing the killing must be extremely skilled and able to kill the animal in one shot. And, finally, there should be respect. Though accounts may be over-romanticised, Native Americans and other traditional peoples have an approach to killing animals which honours them and thanks them for giving their lives so that humans may live. Now this may seem pointless because the animal will still be dead regardless of the attitude of the hunter, but an attitude of respect and reverence will help ensure that life is not needlessly taken. Anyone who does eat meat should have the experience of either killing or witnessing an animal being killed, at least once. They will then have to confront directly the consequences of being a meat-eater and gain respect for the animal.

The endangered Capercaillie

Animals and land 'management'

We live in a very sanitised and safe environment in Britain. Most natural 'enemies' have long ago been wiped out. The dangers that do exist have been created by ourselves: cars, pollution, viruses and each other. Therefore, it is understandable that today many argue for humans to not intervene; we've caused enough problems already, let 'nature' get on with it. However, it's not so simple. We can only take such a position because we don't feel threatened by the natural world. When we do, spiders in our houses, being bitten by mosquitoes, rats in the courtyard of a housing estate, most of us would take drastic action. Recently, Central Park in New York was saturated with insecticide because of a deadly virus-carrying mosquito. In less urbanised parts of the world, where nature has not yet been covered in concrete, there is much more intervention, often needed to combat diseases like malaria. Humans, like all other species, adapt their physical environment to suit their needs. Beavers build dams, birds build nests. So human alteration of the environment to make it more hospitable is itself a natural process.

Protect and survive

Therefore, the idea of land 'management' is not new. (The word 'management' is an unfortunate term that is currently being used to refer to any conscious modification of the environment by humans.) And a key part of this alteration process is taking the lives of other species. Farmers and shepherds have always killed animals to protect their crops and flocks. Anyone would do the same: whatever is necessary to protect the food supply. The process of growing food is more complex than many of us urbanites would imagine. There are many obstacles to be overcome, some of which are caused by animals and birds eating the crops at various stages of growth.

The other area for intervention is when some species threaten other species' existence. You could argue that we should let 'nature take its course', but the reason some species are so vulnerable is because humans have already made a mess of the situation in some way. For example, the RSPB is quite willing to kill foxes and crows because they are a serious threat to the almost extinct capercaillie. Rabbits cause enormous problems in woodland areas, as do red deer. Wardens on nature reserves therefore have to make a choice: will they kill the rabbits or allow a rare aspen grove to be destroyed? (This issue was discussed at length in the last *Organise!*)

Recognising that humans may need to kill animals as part of a land management policy does not mean that an anarchist communist society could not do things better. The problem is not human adaptation of the environment as such, but its scale and quality, driven by the need for capital-

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What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response, then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the sky!

ism to produce profits and be 'cost-effective'.

A society not governed by the profit-motive could develop alternatives where human interests were safeguarded, whilst at the same time allowing animals to keep their lives. Often so many animals are killed because of the desperation not to lose any part of the crop or flock. When the world food production system is organised differently then we can allow animals to take a bit without worrying that there won't be enough for us. Organic farming techniques are being developed that hopefully will mean that we don't have to resort to pesticides every time we are plagued by insects.

The way humans modify their environment is determined by ruling class interests and 'experts', usually with no consultation with the people involved. And they can choose to intervene when it suits them. Cars are causing probably more harm both to humans and other species than rabbits. But a whole range of capitalists are making too much money out of this private transport system to look for alternatives. And farmers aren't allowed to complain when the local fox hunt tramples over their fields, causing more damage than the presence of the fox itself!

Wolves as a solution?

Introducing natural predators, such as wolves, is often put forward as a way of reducing the need for humans to kill annoying animals. However, if people think that having wolves do the dirty work for them lets them off the moral hook, they are mistaken. Introducing wolves that you know will prey on other animals will still mean that you have been responsible for killing animals. And it is only more 'natural' if you assume that humans aren't part of nature.

Wolves are also a problem for domestic animals. In the southern Alps in France, wolves have been reintroduced. It is generally recognised, even by the wolves' most staunch supporters, that they do tend to follow the herds of domestic sheep which make an easy source of food for them. Needless to say, shepherds aren't too happy! This problem has been got around by offering shepherds compensation for sheep killed by wolves. This doesn't mean that wolves shouldn't be reintroduced but that we need to be aware of the consequences. It's still based on human choices and values of what is thought important. In Britain, it has been discussed, but the problem is lack of habitat for the wolf. The first priority must be to create more forests for them to live in.

As can be seen from the wolves' example, there is no quick fix to the moral dilemma of not wanting to kill animals but having to nevertheless. Therefore, though there is much we could do now, and even more we could do in an anarchist communist society, it will take time and much practical experience to work out new ways of doing things that don't involve the death of other species.

Wild animals: killing for fun?

Whereas we just might accept that there may be circumstances where animals need to be killed in order to defend human interests, it seems impossible to justify the killing of animals for sport. Therefore, sports that involve the killing of animals should be banned. Or should they? The issue is actually more complex and therefore the solution not so straightforward. First, we need to distinguish between hunting and shooting. In other parts of the world, hunting is the general term used for the killing of animals in the wild. In Britain, the term 'hunting' is only used for killing animals with dogs. Many who participate in the sport of shooting would agree that this is cruel. The animal is chased for prolonged periods of time and experiences intense fear. A small animal such as a fox may be killed quickly once caught, but a big stag will inevitably take time to die. Shooting does not cause suffering in this way. Shooters take pride in making a clean shot. The stag is killed without even knowing it was being stalked. So whilst it makes sense to ban foxhunting on the grounds of cruelty, the same argument cannot be applied to shooting.

Second, stereotyping anyone involved in the sport of shooting as a bloodthirsty brute is unhelpful. There certainly are people like that, but most would say that it's not the actually killing that they enjoy. It is the process that they enjoy: the getting to know the animal and its habits, the being out-of-doors, the camaraderie of participating in an activity with other people. The idea of just going for a walk without a gun seems senseless to many from a rural background. There is often great respect for and knowledge of the prey. In the way they speak about an animal or bird it is often hard to tell the difference between a wildlife enthusiast or a birdwatcher and someone who is going to go shoot something!

Finally, much of the call for an end to killing animals for sport has focussed on the ruling class varieties. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between disgust for the killing of the animal and the hatred of the people who are doing it. Many who would protect the stag or the grouse would quite happily take the gun and use it on the rich bastard him- (or her-) self. Therefore, a class analysis of the sport of shooting is needed.

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The ruling class and shooting: animals as trophies

The origins of killing animals as a form of recreation lie clearly with the ruling class. It was only they who could afford the luxury of killing an animal for other purposes apart from wanting it as food. The 'sport' goes back at least to Norman times. William the Conqueror was a fanatic hunter. Whole areas of the country were cordoned off and called 'Deer Forests' (often with no actual forest there!) and were the special preserve of the King and his entourage of knights and nobles. Heavy punishments were liberally dished out, including hanging and transportation, to anyone who dared poach a deer or even a rabbit. The class struggle over poaching went on for centuries and still goes on to some extent. Many of the locked gates around sporting estates are there so that any poachers won't be able to get a deer out easily by vehicle.

Queen Victoria gave an added impetus to the sport when she and her hunting consort started coming up to Scotland for the 'season' – a practice still maintained enthusiastically by the current Royals. Balmoral, in Deeside in Scotland, became the model for the Highland 'sporting estate'. Sporting estates proliferated all over the Highlands, distorting both the landscape and the economy. The new landowners came from all sections of the ruling class, not just the aristocracy. The big event is the Glorious Twelfth (of August) when the grouse-shooting season begins. September and October are popular for the stag shooting. In Scotland and on the grouse moors of Yorkshire, the landowner invites his/her cronies for a shooting holiday. It is a form of recreation that symbolises belonging to an elite. Though the stag or grouse might eventually be eaten by someone (eg venison exported abroad), food is not the objective of the shoot. What matters is the size of the 'bag' of grouse (how many they managed to get) or the quality of the antlers ie how many points the antler has. A 12 or 14 'pointer' is the most sought after 'trophy' for the mantelpiece. The Royal shooting party has been known to kill almost 600 grouse in a day! The animal or bird is thus seen as a symbol of one's skill.

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Commercial shooting

Recently, the nature of the sporting estate has changed. Estate owners usually earned their wealth outside and the estate was a way of spending their money to enhance their status. Nowadays, for many (not all by any means), there is some pressure to make the estate pay, or at least reduce the losses. The situation of Archie in 'Monarch of the Glen' is not total fiction! This has meant that shooting has become more commercial. Whole companies exist in order to market 'Shooting Holidays in Scotland'. The 'guests' come mostly from abroad.

There are many reasons why the rich of the world choose Scotland. The main prey are grouse and red deer stags. Some people come to shoot roe deer or hares but they tend to be less well-off, often working class people from Germany, Holland or Italy, because this type of shooting doesn't have the same status. In these countries, with a larger rural population and fewer restrictions from landowners, there has been more of a tradition of shooting small animals for the 'pot'. Hares are an expensive delicacy in Italy and a trip to Scotland with a rented refrigerated van can make a tidy profit. Scotland is the only country in the world that has red grouse and where red deer are so numerous. The guests do not have to go on big wilderness treks to get their trophy. The deer are on open ground so that they can be stalked with minimum effort. Even less effort is required for the grouse as the moorland terrain allows the guests to be driven to their butts.

All of this, together with the romantic image of the Highlands, makes Scotland a much sought-after venue. They come in couples, the men usually (but not always) shooting whilst the women shop. Or they come from companies, a form of corporate bonding amongst the executives. On a world-wide level, these wealthy businessmen often belong to the 'Safari Club'. They travel around the world and collect 'trophies', competing with other members of the club for the biggest, rarest and most numerous trophies.

The income from these commercial shoots is considerable. Guests pay £50 a bird and usually book 100 or so birds for the party. However, the costs of organising the shoots is quite high and many estates are still losing money. However, the owners are reluctant to abandon this tradition as it is still an important part of ruling class culture. As a result, many people's livelihoods, the whole pattern of land use in the Highlands, not to mention the fate of much wildlife like the capercaillie, is linked to the continued existence of these playgrounds for the rich.

The working class and shooting: work and recreation

Much that counts as working class shooting is actually work and could be considered as part of land 'management'. Shooting of deer is done regularly by Forestry Commission and nature reserve stalkers as part of the general effort to reduce deer numbers and allow for tree regeneration of the Scots pine. However, most of those employed will be working on sporting estates and therefore their work is related to the shooting of wildlife as sport.

The shooting done by the keepers and stalkers needs to be distinguished from that of the guests. Their purpose is to 'manage' the wildlife in such a way that the objectives of the sporting estate are achieved. These are: to obtain greater than average numbers of grouse on the moors and to make the cull target for both hinds and stags as agreed by the estate with the Deer Commission. The keepers spend their whole year doing everything they can to keep the grouse and their offspring alive. Their knowledge and care of the birds rivals that of a naturalist. Keepers can be very single-minded and therefore any other

form of wildlife that threatens their grouse is considered a legitimate target. Keepers have been known to poison golden eagles' nests because they may eat their grouse. They themselves must be aware of the irony of this situation; all this work so that some of these birds can be killed! The stalkers, a part from the few months where they takes guests shooting, spend their time completing the cull. The hind season is after the stag one: November to February. As few guests are interested in shooting hinds (no antlers for trophies), the stalker walks (and drives) around the hills on his own.

Some of this type of working class shooting can be justified. It is agreed that deer need to be killed anyway to allow tree regeneration. If anything, those keen to see the regeneration of Scotland's native pine forests argue the stalkers aren't killing enough. When land has been transferred to community ownership, just like on land owned by conservation bodies, deer stalking continues. However, the shooting of the enemies of the grouse is only necessary in order to maintain a ruling class tradition. Most people, including the keepers themselves, never shoot 'driven-grouse' from a butt and therefore do not need to have artificially high numbers of grouse on the moors. If they do shoot them, it is as walked-up or rough shooting and the end result will be a bird in a pot.

Class conflict

Keepers and stalkers have a reputation for being forelock-tugging lackeys. They have traditionally sided with the landowner and historically have a role in catching poachers and keeping people off the land. Climbers in the '50s had to crawl along the tops, sneaking past gun-toting keepers, in order to put up new routes on the cliffs of the Peak District. This role continues today. Many walkers have had nasty encounters with zealous keepers denying them access to their laird's land.

However, like all groups of workers, there is potential for winning them over to our side. Estates are much less likely to be in the hands of the same owner for generations. In addition, keepers and stalkers are increasingly likely to come from outside the area, often having taken degrees in 'wildlife management'. This means that the old loyalty to the 'family' has been replaced by a more independent attitude. Properties are changing hands so frequently in some cases or owned by landowners that are never there. Keepers and stalkers often find themselves running the place on their own as they are the only people who know what to do, instilling a certain contempt for the landowner. Their wages are very low and their houses dependent on the job. With the increasing commercial pressures, there have been redundancies and heavier workloads. They can work incredibly long days, for no extra pay, during the season itself.

Keepers look down on the guests for not being able to shoot without someone loading the gun for them and telling them which way to point. On some estates, the stalkers come into regular conflict with the guests over which stag to shoot. The stalkers aim to shoot stags that do not have a 'good gene pool'. This means that they want to keep the 12 and 14-pointers alive and the guests can have a 10-pointer at most. The guests don't like this because a smaller antler doesn't look so good above the mantelpiece or in the boardroom. Stalkers hate going out with a bad shot. They want the deer killed in one and if the guest doesn't kill the deer with the first bullet, the stalker will quickly intervene.

Enjoyment

In many cases, keepers and stalkers do not actually enjoy the killing of the animal. They are doing it because it has to be done from a land management perspective or because its part of the job. They may enjoy other parts of the job, however. The being out-of-doors, the observing of the wildlife and variety of tasks the job offers. However, there are many others who enjoy the sport itself and would practice it if they had more time. Other recreational working class shooting involves people in rural areas who do other jobs, but who go shooting rabbits or stoats. To do this they have to know people like farmers or form a syndicate. They might shoot roe deer or hinds, but they would have to known someone, though poaching does actually take place. Young people might have a ferret or an air pistol that they go out with to get rabbits. People from the city may also take part but they tend to have some rural roots or connections.

In America, having been prevented from shooting animals (poaching) by the landowners in Europe, the new immigrants took advantage of their new freedom to be able to kill their own food without the risk of hanging or transportation. This tradition has been passed down amongst the males in many working class families. Therefore, there are a number of working class people who would argue against the banning of shooting.

Is there a difference?

Though both involve the killing of animals, there are important differences between ruling class and working class shooting. The ruling class obsession with the size of the 'bag' and with trophies has led to the extinction and near-extinction of many species. Because they are shooting purely for sport and for social objectives, there is no concern to consider the effects of their actions on the land as a whole or on the local economy.

For the working class, killing animals has traditionally been done for a purpose: to put food on the table. And today, that legacy remains. The object of the shoot are animals that they believe need to be killed for land management or which can be killed and eaten because they are not endangered. This does not mean that all working class shooters are exemplary. Like their ruling class counterparts, there will be many who are cruel and kill with total disregard for the consequences. In the Alps, ex-soldiers machine-gunned marmots and chamois for no reason whatsoever. Native Americans played their part in the demise of the buffalo. The almost exclusive male character of the sport can lead to much macho posturing that is quite sickening.

There are therefore two issues to consider. Are we in favour of creating a society where all shooting by people who say they enjoy it, even if they are doing it in keeping with strict conservation and humane criteria, is not allowed? And if so, how do we go about winning over other members of our class to this position?

In answer to the first question, I would argue that the answer depends on whether or not we will still be killing animals for food and as part of land management. If we are, then I see no problem with the job done by people who enjoy it. If we don't actually need animals to be killed, but some people want to go out and kill wild animals that are not endangered for their own pleasure, then it is more difficult. As long as they actually use the animal for something, though, I can't see how we can force people not to. Instead we would hope that as the new society developed, people would become more interested in looking at and observing wildlife than shooting it. This process has

***Organise!* index**
A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues 14-43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

We need the rural working class on our side.

already begun. Many shooters have become wildlife photographers instead and a majority of people living in rural areas are not at all interested in shooting. The children of gamekeepers have learned much from their fathers but are using their knowledge and appreciation of wildlife in different ways, some of them working for conservation agencies.

The second question is particularly important in the current period. The Countryside Alliance has managed to mobilise many of the rural working class under their umbrella and for their objectives. The Gamekeepers demonstration in Edinburgh in July against the Watson Bill illustrated this. The Watson Bill is explicitly aimed at foxhunting, which is only in the Borders on a very small-scale. But the landowners have instilled the idea that it will first be foxhunting and then shooting – something Watson himself has categorically dismissed. This has put the fear of job loss into the workers themselves as well as other rural residents. We could dismiss all these workers as counter revolutionary, but I would argue for another tack. We need the rural working class on our side both during the revolution and in the constructing of a new society. Their experience on the land will be vital.

No moralism

First, moralistic arguments about how awful it is that these 'bad' people are killing cute little animals will not get us anywhere. This will only alienate many people and reinforce the view that city dwellers really don't understand the countryside. I have already tried to show that there are many cases when animals do actually need to be killed. Instead, the focus of struggle must be against landowners, not against shooting. Workers like gamekeepers will not be class enemies because their occupation involves them killing animals but if they side with the landowner against the rest of the working class. The conservation organisations tend to have a strategy of changing the land use without changing the system of ownership. They would be content if the private landowner would agree to stop running the estate for sport and plant trees instead. This is already happening on some estates. There is an example of one foreign owner who can't stand the idea of shooting anything and wants it all to stop!

So, instead of saying we want the shooting to stop, we should argue for the end of the private landowner and for the estate workers, together with people in the community and even those from outside who visit the area, to manage the estate themselves. If this were the case, then we would see quite a transformation in land use and power. This is happening to a certain extent on Knoydart and, though they are not revolutionary, the John Muir Trust on their Skye properties has attempted to show that things can be done differently when conservationists work together with people who live on the land. If the workers see that there is an alternative, one which is better paid and where they don't have to kow-tow to landowners and rich Americans, then the alliance which has been cleverly constructed by the ruling class will fall to bits.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't campaign against the killing of wild animals. But the focus should be on ruling class sport, the killing of endangered species and cruelty. In addition, it should be linked to a general campaign for a transformation of the way land is owned and cared for and should be based on debate and discussion with other members of our class in order to construct a united movement that can create a better world for both humans and the other species that we share the planet with.

(Out of) Workplace notes

FOUND YOURSELF OUT of work? The exploiter who previously bought your life no longer has any use for you? Time on your hands, short of things to do? No problem. It could turn out to be a golden opportunity to find there can be more to life than the tyranny of the workplace.

In an imposed world, instead of life consisting of meaningful pursuit, our core humanity vanishes without trace, devalued and obliterated. Technology is reshaping us, whether as workers or consumers. Being thrown out of work might just be the spur that precipitates change, a chance to confront the given status quo and to structure life in the context of one's own devising rather than follow a script laid down from the day we are born. With time to think, we learn to reject, challenge and oppose everything drilled into us up through the conditioning phases of schooling, social life, workplace discipline and the vacuous nonsense poisoning the mind via the non-stop media barrage. Life can be considered in a clearer, more penetrating light. Importantly, the formula for living may be set according to a perspective of choice, instead of having each day's precious time dictated through a controlling framework that frequently results in boredom, fatigue, stress, illness and interpersonal harassment, all maladies degrading to the human condition and spirit, and which are endured constantly workers struggling to scratch a living from the crumbs cast downward on the terms of the bosses, they of the exploiting class, busy raping the world from corner to corner in the insane pursuit of profit, power and what they regard as wealth.

Alarm clocks and buzzers

When this writer came out of work by virtue of a third redundancy in an (over) long working life, it wasn't with the explicit aim to enjoy it, but only that it not turn into a negative experience, depressing or limiting to the quality of life either physically or mentally. The longer the system, by its own shortcomings, kept me at arms-length from employment, with not even the hint of a half-decent job showing its face, the easier it got to see through all the lies, the deceit and illusions upon which capitalism is built, fuelled and sustained. So, how desirable or necessary was it to place myself yet again inside the clutches of conformity to an order that is detested by nearly everybody who has to put up with it? Was it really such an enticing prospect to submerge one's being once more in the abjectly competitive, soul-crushing regime once again? A world virtually sealed off from normality by death-wraps of tarmac and caskets of concrete, noise and pollution

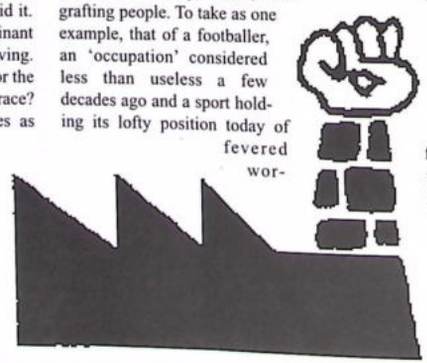
swirling around every street, choking everything that draws breath from within its confines. Where was the attraction in returning to that sad little routine? Money? Busyness? Social approval? No thanks, here was discovery of a new, fresh, uncluttered, pleasantly harmonious world, a world that responded not to shrieking alarm clocks and buzzers, but to natural rhythms, patterns and cycles through which everything moved at its own pace. Flora, fauna, colours, sights, sounds, smells, growth, things that can never be empathised with, marooned inside the suffocating atmosphere of the industrial concentration camps called factories, or in the sterile isolation of walled, sealed and cocoon-like offices, indeed anywhere where life has become a commodity to be bought, sold and homogenised. No more reluctant submission to a hierarchical order based on smiley boardroom fascism with its power junkies, underlings, creeps, regimentation and payroll numbers ascribed like identification tags to armies of workplace slaves the world over.

Suddenly there was time and space to get involved, to connect up with important things, all those things that it was a struggle to cope with when life had to be put up for sale to an employer. There was time and space to positively engage in the fight back against capitalism's oppressions, to help plan and take part in occupations, demos, to keep in touch with others on a regular, personal basis. Visiting/writing/campaigning for victims of the system. Castigating scabs from the solidarity of a picket line. Working on articles for alternative zines. Cultivating an allotment. Help with the care of sick relatives or friends. There is no shortage of tasks. There is much in need of doing and not a little of it far outside the blueprint set down for us all without input, discussion or agreement from the masses.

No sane person would acquiesce with the kind of world that has been created and is being perpetuated if they could avoid it. Money, profit, has become the dominant factor around every single facet of living. So is it really surprising if some fear for the very survival and sanity of the human race? When those who position themselves as experts and leaders are responsible for manifold destruction at every level, how else can they ever be regarded other than as mad, bad and inhuman beings defining everything and everyone in terms of price, gain and loss? And the cost of this madness is inevitably wrought upon ordinary people, changing them and breeding irrationality and conflict in every aspect of life: desperate people driven to commit terrible acts that in an equal world they would never be pushed to even contemplate. The work ethic was created by and alongside the profit motive. It is the engine, the pulse, the heartbeat of the vicious capitalist monster, the corporate culprit now metaphorically careering right off its axis. Rejection of work and the exploiter's agenda need not be negative. Work undertaken at the behest of a ruling class is a brutal and repressive act of social control. Whole lives are eaten up by the work habit. The refusal of work (employment) would instantly curtail (if enough of us got out of the loop) much of the world-slaughtering capitalist ethos. Is that not the ultimate objective, which every anarchist revolutionary aspires to achieve?

The spectacle

If these are some of the worst elements of having to submit oneself to the 'benevolence' of a boss, there are other disparities permeating the world of paid work. When, for instance, we compare what 'ordinary' people earn with the obscene amounts of money 'earned' by the cult of the self-obsessed such as endlessly flaunt themselves in the public eye like sports stars, 'personalities', show-biz freaks and politicians with fingers in every pocket and every pie, not to mention the ruthless, worthless scum manipulating the filthy drug cartels. All pulling in huge bundles of money, yet possessed of no discernible talent or socially commendable merit, whilst people who do the vital tasks in the community receive barely a pittance, this despite enduring long hours, poor conditions and the constant fear of job insecurity. Some (safe and warm in the comfort-zone) will call it envy; but for the life of me it's not plain why these celebrity cretins are reaping rewards so utterly beyond the dreams of ordinary, decent, hard-grafting people. To take as one example, that of a footballer, an 'occupation' considered less than useless a few decades ago and a sport holding its lofty position today of fevered worship solely due to marketing and the media (football is now corporate-led, focussed on the middle classes), not through any commonweal value or social contribution. It is galling to listen to the comments of the clowns in government when they're ranting and pontificating about the 'dignity of work'. Where is the dignity, much less the morality, in a remark like the following, muttered by one of the so-called people's game's high-profile role models, Michael Owen, a 20-year-old international footballer, earnings potential £50,000 a week: "There is nothing going on in the world at the moment that I find distressing or have a view on" (October 1999). Is that not the pinnacle of pigshit, imbecilic ignorance? Why doesn't this cosseted, shallow, privileged young man simply tell the truth and say that he doesn't give a damn about all the misery, suffering and devastation going on right across the globe? Is this what fifty grand a week does for you? Turn you into an insensitive, dumb, myopic primadonna who doesn't know, doesn't care what's happening in the real world? Keep it, ball-kicker, some folks with more integrity than you'll ever know will settle for £50 a week, grudgingly repaid to us as the dole, and a justifiably clear conscience, while trying to put the world on a fairer footing, if not for themselves then for those who come after.



The argument for refusing work in it's current context was never more clearly put than by Peter Marshall in his book *Riding The Wind:* "In nearly all cases, the so-called work-shy are square pegs in round holes. Given a meaningful activity which fulfils their natures rather than degrades them, which is undertaken voluntarily rather than forced upon them, which unites them with their fellows rather than divides them, which enhances nature rather than destroys it, then I believe virtually everyone would be pleased to do real work. They would then work not for the sake of money, not for the sake of reward, not for the sake of status but for the intrinsic value of the work itself." Bob Black also puts it all in a nutshell: "Work is the source of nearly all misery in the world. Almost any evil you'd care to name comes from working or from living in a world designed for work. In order to stop suffering, we have to stop working."

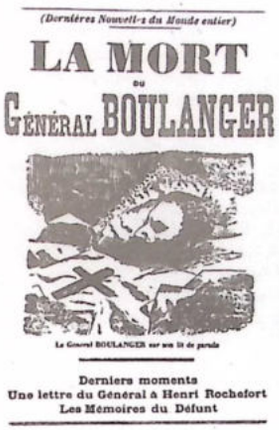
For further can-work-won't-work, spanner in the works ideas, see: *The Abolition of Work,* Bob Black; *Ballad Against Work,* Majdoor Library Group; *Finding Time,* Norman Juppe; *The Refusal of Work,* Echanges Et Mouvement.

Paul SIGNAC

PAUL SIGNAC (1863-1935), like his fellow Frenchmen Camille Pissaro and Maximilien Luce, was both an outstanding artist and an anarchist. He was a theoretician of new painting techniques, a lover of the sea and sailing and a 'discoverer' of St Tropez. Born into a bourgeois family, he never had any financial problems and could paint in good conditions. After having seen an exhibition of paintings by Monet in 1880, he decided to finish his studies and become an Impressionist painter. His first paintings represent the quays of the Seine at Asnieres and the seaside.

In 1884, at the Salon of Independent Artists, he met Georges Seurat and adopted his new techniques of painting. Neo-impressionism was born. The colours used were pure, applied in little touches to give maximum luminosity and harmony. Signac used scientific theories of colour in his work. He thought that the effect science could have on art was revolutionary. Like Luce, Signac wanted to put over life of workers and peasants in his paintings. So one of his paintings includes gasometers on the border of town and country. He also painted interiors of bourgeois houses where the people represented have a sinister air.

In 1887, he painted pictures of the port of Collioure, the following year that of Portrieux. A lover of the sea, he visited the Mediterranean coast in 1892 and discovered St Tropez. Like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the exiled Jewish American anarchists who lived here in the 1920s, he found St Tropez charming and not at all the den of the rich that it is today.



Leaflet announcing General Boulanger's fictitious death, illustrated by Signac, 1889

Individuality

In 1888, Signac discovered anarchist ideas by reading Elisee Reclus, Kropotkin and Jean Grave, who all developed the ideas of anarchist communism. With his friends Angrand Cross, Luce and Pissaro he contributed to Jean Grave's paper *Les Temps Nouveaux* (New Times). His financial support was considerable; he sent regular cheques and made a gift of his works for five lotteries between 1895 and 1912. But the art of the militant did not attract him and, unlike Luce, he only provided five drawings and two lithographs to the paper. He thought that the subject did not count for much in art. For him, what was revolutionary was the search for harmony which, he thought, contributed to the struggle against ruling class conventions. He felt that many great artists had been maltreated in the past and saw the history of art in a political manner. He advocated the need for social revolution alongside the need for artistic freedom. He saw anarchism as the best guarantee of the latter. He thought that it was up to each individual artist how best they served the movement. "The anarchist painter is not the one who will create anarchist pictures, but he who, without desire for recompense, will fight with all his individuality against official bourgeois conventions by means of a personal contribution."

Nevertheless, it is interesting to study two anarchist paintings that are a reflection of his ideas. In the 'The Demolition Workers', two workers are demolishing buildings representing society, whilst on the horizon the sun of anarchy is rising. In 'The Time of Harmony' a huge painting originally destined for the House of the People in Brussels, an idyllic version of the future society is represented. This was painted in 1894, in the year when individual attacks by anarchists on members of the boss class were at their height. In this work, activities of work and leisure are peaceful and in total harmony, though Signac can be criticised for his typecast roles for the sexes.

Signac's work would have an influence on the new art, on the Fauves and the Expressionists. In 1904 Matisse came to paint with him at St Tropez.

The First World War

The First World War was deeply traumatic for Signac. He was disgusted by the way Kropotkin, Grave and other anarchists (a minority in the movement) had become supporters of the war. These were people he had greatly admired. He was demoralised and could not paint for three years. He took part in activities for peace alongside the writers Barbusse and Romain Rolland, considering himself an internationalist.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution filled him with hope. After the war he began to paint afresh, with landscapes of Brittany, Normandy, the Atlantic coast and Corsica. He became President of the Salon of Independent Artists, which permitted young artists to exhibit. A year before his death he mobilised with other artists and writers like Gide in the Vigilance Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals. His last paintings represented great sailing ships, witnesses, like Signac, of a fast disappearing world.

A Molotov might do it

THE HISTORY OF SOCIETY CAN be written in the actions of ordinary people. Waves of protest break over a society not because leaders stir up waters of discontent but when people dare to claim rights and benefits that they think should be theirs. Protest waves subside when people are satisfied, exhausted or when they are cowed into submission by police or terrorists.

There is wave of protest sweeping around the world. Is it a truly significant series of events or merely one more 'long wave' of dissent doomed to recuperation and demobilisation? What are the critical points within the 'protest cycle' that seems to move inexorably through mobilisation, disruption, exhaustion and recuperation without moving on to a more threatening, revolutionary phase?

We can learn a lot from a study of the decade of protest (*Il Sessantotto*) in Italy from 1965-1975. It was part of the 'new wave' of protest that began to sweep over Western Europe. Using direct confrontational action, people erupted into the streets, the campuses and the factories, demanding new rights, access to power and revolution. The demand for autonomy caused students to occupy universities, for tenants to 'auto-reduce' their rents and workers to slow down production lines. Women campaigned for more nurseries, greater access to contraception and abortion and greater action against rapists.

These actions had political significance because of large-scale and widespread industrial action; society seemed to be on the edge of collapse and governments teetered. The Italian economy was restructuring, as all capitalist economies periodically do. On the one hand, some old or state industries were shedding tens of thousands of workers. On the other, the bosses were trying to introduce 'flexibility' and new processes. Both provoked strikes in defense of jobs and for more pay, shorter hours, to maintain differentials, and so on. These were matched in intensity and spread by rent strikes and mass campaigns over housing, transport, the environment and other issues.

The institutionalisation of the mass parties, the unions they sponsored and the municipal councils they controlled led mostly working people to look to other means and other ways of making demands. With a combination of threat and ridicule, radical groups and the people they mobilised disrupted institutions, opposed elites and attacked authorities. But "when the dust of disorder had settled... the boundaries of mass politics had been extended". Disorder contributed to the broadening of bourgeois democracy.

Protest activated the state's formal mechanisms of decision-making (the task group, the white paper, legislation) and reforms were made. When excluded groups protest on behalf of marginalised agendas, do they simply strengthen democracy and the state that hides behind it?

Disruption

Disruption is possible where societies and organisations are polarising and where victory or defeat will have far-reaching effects: an example would be the demands for greater democracy in the Catholic Church and the challenge of liberation theology – if their supporters had triumphed it would be a radically different entity. Does such structural conflict exist? Possibly, as we begin to confront the multi-nationals and the process of globalisation they are pushing. The question of power in areas such as national sovereignty, trade, finance and development is again, as it has before, reaching a critical point. Where political arrangements are unstable and allies available to the movements, the wave of mobilisation will be prolonged. But where alignments are stable and elites repressive, opportunities for protest disappear and demobilisation follows. This fairly well describes Europe and North America, where it is likely that protest movements will be short and quickly recuperated through short-term political alliances, reforms and repression.

Protest

The potential for protest is chiefly determined by a number of factors. Firstly, the extent to which formal political institutions are open or closed to participation by groups on the margins of democracy and the presence or absence of repression.

Most bourgeois democracies used to be closed to dissent but have learned the lessons of 'inclusion'. Levels of repression are comparatively low, but the capitalist state keeps its armoury of repression well-maintained; witness the Anti-Terrorist and RIP Acts. Secondly, opportunities present themselves as capitalism restructures and political parties realign in response. Thirdly, conflicts between elites signal weakness and create potential allies for the radical groups; the conflictual consensus of modern politics contributes to disenchantment and protest but important political differences just do not exist. The political system may be decaying but is not (yet) beginning to realign.

Protest begins when interests and values are not being represented and when the incentives to protest outweigh the cost and risks involved. The probability that people will use disruptive direct action depends on the depth of their grievances, the availability of alternative means of expression, the perceived costs and risks of collective action and the presence or absence of prospective organisers. When social conflict acquires a visibility and symbolic 'language' people can understand and identify with, collective action will develop; especially when the justifying culture of society is weak due to rapid economic, industrial and social change. But when grievances have been aired but not advanced, when the repertoire of peaceful protest runs out, when repression raises the price we all must pay and if we have not greatly increased the numbers of skilled and active organisers – what then? People cannot for long sustain campaigns on behalf of their rights or benefits without identifying them with general values and reaching out to others through a framework of common understanding. Does this explain why (in these islands at least), environmental protest has not developed a mass base nor has protest spread to other groups and interests (such as housing, policing, work and so on)? And if it does not develop a mass base, how easy for the state to isolate the 'trouble-makers' by making concessions to the 'common sense majority'!

Organisation

What role did 'organisation' play? In Italy at least, the most successful groups were decentralised and provisional, preventing both decay into ideological sects or degeneration into bureaucracy, and included a strong dose of spontaneity. While an obsession with organisation can dampen disruption and reduce levels of mobilisation, material conditions will burst through whatever organisations exist and throw up new forms of collective action. But as these groups try to intensify disruption to gain mass support, they come under pressures from outside and within which demand greater co-ordination, more control over militants and an increase in organisation. But people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes and it is the concrete experience that moulds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets. Small, radical groups and their scattered supporters will never organise or stimulate mass protest on their own. They need the generalisation of discontent (which exists in some parts of the world but not in all parts of the world) that only worsening material conditions and increased militancy create, allied to groups possessing a mass base and organisational form. In other words, "socialising the class struggle" or (as the AF would put it) "creating a culture of resistance". The problem is that (at the moment) environmentalism and its anti-capitalist rhetoric is inspired by 'post-material' issues (ie not based on our material needs), and has a radical pragmatism but no real ideological unity or organisational substructure. It can link with other agendas but cannot unify them.

There is a wave of protest sweeping around the world.

Cycles of protest

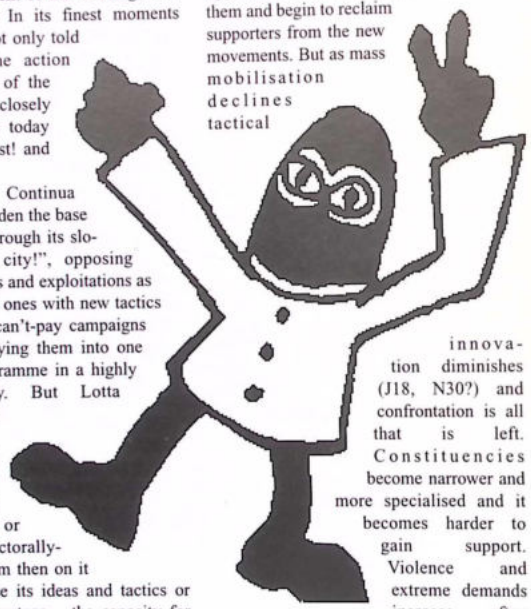
If in Italy the protest cycle followed a familiar pattern to past waves of dissent – from rupture to mobilisation to exhaustion and institutionalisation – can we see similar features in the new protest movements today?

Protest cycles often begin within existing organisations and institutions but are quickly externalised. Studies of protest by Indian peasant women, farmers in South American or the urban poor surrounding any major city in the developing world show how (often decadent or corrupted organisations) fail their members and constituencies and are abandoned. New actors use expressive and confrontational forms of action, demonstrating to others less daring than themselves that the system is vulnerable to disruption and that they have grievances in common.

The first stage in the protest cycle is disruption, which appears in a few sectors of intense conflict (Twyford Down, Newbury, Poll Tax). Protest is spread chiefly through imitation by other groups picking up on issues and tactics. But the rate of spread is determined by the availability of people using experiences and organisational skills acquired during earlier campaigns. And where we make negotiable demands the state has the resources and the guile to concede where it must and compromise where it can't, using institutionalised mediators (like the unions and social democratic parties) to moderate demands and recuperate dissent or, where this is not enough, to join with it in a process of stigmatisation, isolation and condemnation.

New Labour attacks on J18 and N30 protesters is in a long tradition of such actions. As in Italy, protesters look for issues and campaigns they can link with or which are connected in some way, for instance engaging with women's and neighbourhood groups to protest the health effects of roads pollution.

A very good example would be *Lotta Continua* in Italy. It was initially a loose coalition of radicals from a variety of 'left' groups and splinters who rejected the positions taken by the organisations they belonged to on questions of the vanguard, autonomy and working class orientations. Chiefly, militant workers and students in North Italy (especially Turin), they coalesced around the slogan "The Struggle Continues" through a series of strikes (especially the 1969 FIAT strike) and 'encounters' and rejected the idea that it was chiefly or only within the factory that the working class became revolutionaries. For them, what was important was not where the class struggle took place or over what issue but what the working class learned about the class struggle and itself and the development of the working class through struggle. In its finest moments Lotta Continua not only told people where the action was, it was part of the action and most closely resembles groups today such as Earth First! and RTS.



Lotta Continua attempted to broaden the base of the struggle through its slogan "Take the city!", opposing urban oppressions and exploitations as well as industrial ones with new tactics (the rent strike, can't-pay campaigns and so on), unifying them into one agenda and programme in a highly successful way. But Lotta Continua adopted a movementist strategy rather than staying on in the unions or forming an electorally-based party. From then on it had to generalise its ideas and tactics or lose its one advantage – the capacity for disruption – that could bring it new support and continue to challenge existing institutions. Its movementist principles and tactics led it to seek an explosion, not mobilisation and organisation of the masses.

This was fine as long as mobilisation and participation were increasing, but without a mass base de-mobilisation left only the rhetoric of revolution and violence. The new movement organisations 'led' the masses as long as there were masses to be led; but they could not lead people where they did not wish to go, a danger the environmental movement and anarchism together face today. In Italy, workers had woken up to their economic power just as the post-war political consensus was unravelling, creating opportunities and allies. Protest politics rose to a peak just as mass mobilisation was beginning to decline, the workers bought off by economic and social concessions. The shifting pattern of conflict and campaign prevented a single coalition for change developing and allowed the elite to segment the movement by a strategy of piecemeal reform and repression.

Spontaneity

The peak of mobilisation contains a combination of spontaneity and organisation but as protest diffuses through society, established groups themselves adopt more aggressive forms of activity, institutionalise them and begin to reclaim supporters from the new movements. But as mass

Lessons to be learnt

Italy's lesson is that inadequate strategic analysis and poor tactical decisions can lead social movements into the cul de sac of institutionalisation or the wastelands of terrorism. In the end, the extra-parliamentary groups in Italy, without a serious revolutionary project or the mass base to carry it through created a generation with the desire for radical change, a cynicism about reform and some of the tools of protest and disruption but little else. "For [Lotta Continua's] leaders, the only solution to these problems was organisation." Organisation is a product of the decline of mobilisation. And the development of more stable organisational forms could not halt the decline in the intensity and spread of the class struggle either here or in Italy. The revolutionary tide ebbed. Small groups of agitators and clandestine armed groups are what remain, keeping the flame alive and memories bright, striking where they can but increasingly isolated from the mass of the people: 'islands' of autonomy, radicalised neighbourhoods and tiny campaigning groups which continue to be attacked by Italy's repressive state.

Compromise

The Italian protesters of the 1960s and 1970s made non-negotiable demands but were unable to press them home. The State was able to compromise – but not with them. While some demanded fundamental change, the majority did not connect the way they pressed their material demands with any need to fundamentally transform society. The workers won major concessions through rank-and-file and autonomous action and, as importantly, forced the unions to adopt their demands as their own. The industrialists and government caved in (knowing that the gains could be recouped later), for the unions had managed to contain the unrest within the ranks and would keep their historic bargaining and mediating role. The nature of industrial democracy changed (for a while) but not the nature of the system itself.

For interest groups, concessions by the state robbed them of their *raison d'être*. We face the same problem. Many campaigns are infused with a fierce critique of institutions, recognised as tools of the state. But autonomist, grass-roots campaigns being waged across the world are not necessarily revolutionary and will only become so when people acquire the will and the means to destroy capitalism by its expropriation. Campaigns against work, against state surveillance, police repression or authoritarian education in schools (for instance) could broaden the mass base of protest and disruption and link worker with libertarian, the victimised with the innocent. 'Anti-capitalism's' narrow front of saving the planet must be broadened into the wider front of the class struggle – the struggle of those without power or the means to live without being forced to toil against those who have.

Global collapse

It is encouraging that so many throughout the world continue to demand not only material advancement but also new or withheld rights under the banner and with the ideology of 'anti-capitalism'. In industrialising countries this was always a life and death struggle fuelling both the militancy of the oppressed and the fierceness of reaction. Our struggles in these islands over the last two hundred years are mirrored in the Philippines, Brazil, South Korea, Colombia and dozens of other countries today.

The next crisis of capitalism will not be a crisis of imperialism (for instance) but one of environmentalism; the problems of over-rapid and inappropriate development that formed the radicalised working class in Europe will fuel the same process globally but on a much bigger scale. In the West, struggle remains at the level of reform. Yes, the rhetoric of anti-capitalism is there, but the potential for marginalisation and recuperation is great (although, thankfully, transglobal corporations and institutions show little willingness to compromise nor the bourgeois democracies of reining them in – capitalism's oppression on a global scale will go on intensifying). Prague may well have been an important event and as levels of exploitation increase, we may even see larger protests, mass campaigns of rural and urban poor and even the toppling of regimes and governments. But it is also likely that in the developing world struggle will be transformed into movements for democracy, supported by the west and especially the US without the development of any deeply-rooted class consciousness. This suggests that the decisive struggle will be in capitalism's stronghold in the West.

But here, the environmental and anti-capitalist movement that has sprung from it is bound to fail and be recuperated in the short- to medium-term unless political or economic circumstances change radically (accepting that it might well be environmental catastrophe that triggers political or economic crisis). The movement's thinkers argue that capitalism is bound to generate periodic and mounting economic, political and ecological crises and there is a great deal of evidence supporting this view. Global collapse may lead to chaos on an unthinkable scale, but not necessarily (and is very unlikely to lead to) revolution.

If this is so, what can anarchists and anarchism do? Well, it is already being done. The analysis that capitalism is the underlying cause and mechanism creating the 'ecological' and 'developmental' crisis is one anarchists have been refining and developing for decades. The task is to ensure that that analysis is available to all in struggle so that they can test its bases and conclusions in the light of their own experiences, one we share with the environmental and anti-capitalist movements.

Within that message is a second: that neither the state nor the institutions of mediation and recuperation (the unions, bourgeois parties) can deliver us from capitalism but only feed off us; we may win a strike or a campaign but be, in political terms, much worse off. Ecological catastrophe may lead to decisive events (as catastrophic defeat in WWI did in Russia in 1917) but leave the population of the world at the mercy of hunger, poverty, war and dictatorship. We can orientate ourselves and align ourselves with this coming struggle only if we recognise that the revolution may be made elsewhere but its agenda must be our agenda. Capitalist exploitation and oppression will continue to intensify and keep these struggles alive and energised. What the anarchists and autonomists of Italy proved was that the working class in all countries seethes with injustice and is never entirely cowed by oppression – it needs little encouragement to vent its anger. We must supply the spark, if not the means as well.

Bibliography

This article was inspired by and borrows heavily from Sidney Tarrow's *Democracy & Disorder* (1989). Other reading might include Charles Tilly's *From Mobilisation to Revolution* (1987), Judith Hellman's *Journeys Among Women* (1975) and anything in translation by Luigi Bobbio or Adriano Sofri on the period or Lotta Continua. If you want an insight into the AF's view of what needs to be done, read our *Manifesto for the Millennium.*

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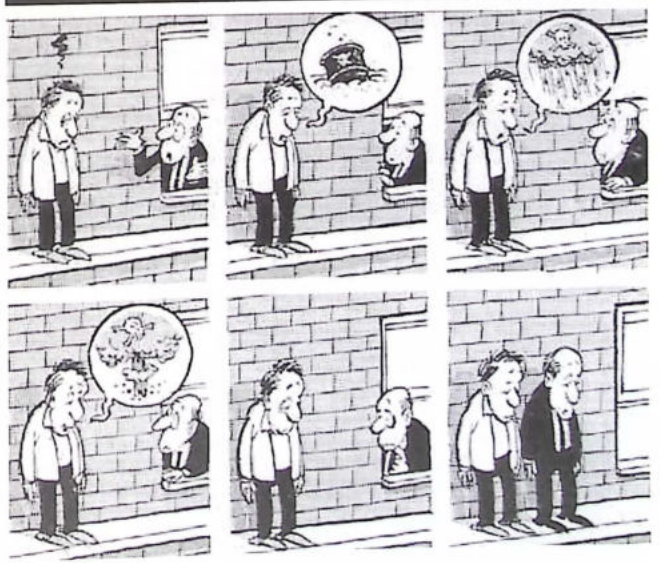


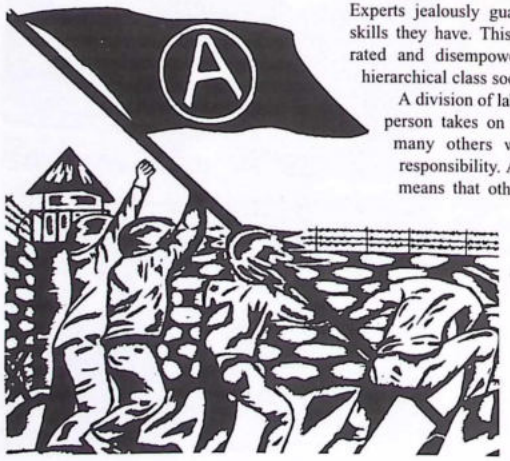
Give up activism

This article is available on-line as part of the Reflections on J18 discussions. It is a contribution to the discussion of the separation between activists and the working class. It takes as its starting point the anti-capitalist demonstrations of 18 June 1999. However, it could just as easily apply to any of the recent demonstrations. The author writes from a viewpoint supportive of the actions. We think it is well worth a read and include it here in the hope of furthering debate. It is our intention to continue the discussion in the next issue of *Organise!* The author's address is at the end of the article.

ONE PROBLEM APPARENT in the June 18th day of action was the adoption of an activist mentality. This problem became particularly obvious with June 18th, precisely because the people involved in organising it and the people involved on the day tried to push beyond these limitations. This piece is no criticism of anyone involved – rather, an attempt to inspire some thought on the challenges that confront us if we are really serious in our intention of doing away with the capitalist mode of production.

Experts

By 'an activist mentality', what I mean is that people think of themselves primarily as activists and as belonging to some wider community of activists. The activist identifies with what they do and thinks of it as their role in life, like a job or career. In the same way, some people will identify with their job as a doctor or a teacher, and instead of it being something they just happen to be doing, it becomes an essential part of their self-image.



The activist is a specialist or an expert in social change. To think of yourself as being an activist means to think of yourself as being somehow privileged or more advanced than others in your appreciation of the need for social change, in the knowledge of how to achieve it and as leading or being in the forefront of the practical struggle to create this change.

Activism, like all expert roles, has its basis in the division of labour – it is a specialised, separate task. The division of labour is the foundation of class society, the fundamental division being that between mental and manual labour. The division of labour operates, for example, in medicine or education. Instead of healing and bringing up kids being common knowledge and tasks that everyone has a hand in, this knowledge becomes the specialised property of doctors and teachers – experts that we must rely on to do these things for us. Experts jealously guard and mystify the skills they have. This keeps people separated and disempowered and reinforces hierarchical class society.

A division of labour implies that one person takes on a role on behalf of many others who relinquish this responsibility. A separation of tasks means that other people will grow your food and make your clothes and supply your electricity, while you get on with achieving social change. The activist, being the expert, assumes that other people aren't doing anything to change their lives and so feels a duty or a responsibility to do it on their behalf. Activists think they are compensating for the lack of activity by others. Defining ourselves as activists means defining our actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who make social change – whereas, of course, class struggle is happening all the time.

Form and content

The tension between the form of 'activism' in which our political activity appears and its increasingly radical content has only been growing over the last few years. The background of a lot of the people involved in June 18th is of being 'activists' who 'campaign' on an issue. The political progress that has been made in the activist scene over the last few years has resulted in a situation where many people have moved beyond single issue campaigns against specific companies or developments to a rather ill-defined, yet nonetheless promising, anti-capitalist perspective. Yet, although the content of the campaigning activity has altered, the form of activism has not. So, instead of taking on Monsanto and going to their headquarters and occupying it, we have now seen beyond the single facet of capital represented by Monsanto and so develop a 'campaign' against capitalism. And where better to go and occupy than what is perceived as being the headquarters of capitalism – the City?

Our methods of operating are still the same as if we were taking on a specific corporation or development, despite the fact that capitalism is not at all the same sort of thing and the ways in which one might bring down a particular company are not at all the same as the ways in which you might bring down capitalism. For example, vigorous campaigning by animal rights activists has succeeded in wrecking both Consort dog breeders and Hillgrove Farm cat breeders. The businesses were ruined and went into receivership. Similarly, the campaign waged against arch vivisectionists, Huntingdon Life Sciences, succeeded in reducing their share price by 33%, but the company just about managed to survive by running a desperate PR campaign in the City to pick up prices. Activism can very successfully bring down a business, yet to bring down capitalism a lot more will be required than to simply extend this sort of activity to every business and every sector. Similarly, with the targeting of butcher's shops by animal rights activists, the net result is probably only to aid the supermarkets in closing down all the small butchers' shops, thus assisting the process of competition and the 'natural selection' of the marketplace. Thus, activists often succeed in destroying one small business while strengthening capital overall.

A similar thing applies with anti-roads activism. Wide-scale anti-roads protests have created opportunities for a whole new sector of capitalism – security, surveillance, tunnellers, climbers, experts and consultants. We are now one 'market risk' among others to be taken into account when bidding for a roads contract. We may have actually assisted the rule of market forces, by forcing out the companies that are weakest and least able to cope. Protest-bashing consultant Amanda Webster says: "The advent of the protest movement will actually provide market advantages to those contractors who can handle it effectively." Again, activism can bring down a business or stop a road, but capitalism carries merrily on, if anything stronger than before.

These things are surely an indication, if one were needed, that tackling capitalism will require not only a quantitative change (more actions, more activists) but a qualitative one (we need to discover some more effective form of operating). It seems we have very little idea of what it might actually require to bring down capitalism. As if all it needed was some sort of critical mass of activists occupying offices to be reached and then we'd have a revolution...

The form of activism has been preserved even while the content of this activity has moved beyond the form that contains it. We still think in terms of being 'activists' doing a 'campaign' on an 'issue', and because we are 'direct action' activists we will go and 'do an action' against our target. The method of campaigning against specific developments or single companies has been carried over into this new thing of taking on capitalism. We're attempting to take on capitalism and conceptualising what we're doing in completely inappropriate terms, utilising a method of operating appropriate to liberal reformism. So we have the bizarre spectacle of 'doing an action' against capitalism – an utterly inadequate practice.

Roles

The role of the 'activist' is a role we adopt just like that of policeman, parent or priest – a strange, psychological form we use to define ourselves and our relation to others. The 'activist' is a specialist or an expert in social change – yet the harder we cling to this role and notion of what we are, the more we actually impede the change we desire. A real revolution will involve the breaking out of all preconceived roles and the destruction of all specialism – the reclamation of our lives. The seizing control over our own destinies which is the act of revolution will involve the creation of new selves and new forms of interaction and community. 'Experts' in anything can only hinder this.

> Activism is based on the misconception that only activists make social change.

The Situationist International developed a stringent critique of roles and particularly the role of 'the militant'. Their criticism was mainly directed against leftist and social-democratic ideologies because that was mainly what they encountered. Although these forms of alienation still exist and are plain to be seen, in our particular milieu it is the liberal activist we encounter more often than the leftist militant. Nevertheless, they share many features in common (which of course is not surprising).

The Situationist, Raoul Vaneigem, defined roles like this: "Stereotypes are the dominant images of a period... The stereotype is the model of the role; the role is a model form of behaviour. The repetition of an attitude creates a role." To play a role is to cultivate an appearance to the neglect of everything authentic: "we succumb to the seduction of borrowed attitudes." As role-players we dwell in inauthenticity – reducing our lives to a string of cliches – "breaking [our] day down into a series of poses chosen more or less unconsciously from the range of dominant stereotypes." This process has been at work since the early days of the anti-roads movement. At Twyford Down after Yellow Wednesday in December '92, press and media coverage focused on the Dongas Tribe and the dreadlocked countercultural aspect of the protests. Initially, this was by no means the predominant element – there was a large group of ramblers at the eviction for example. But people attracted to Twyford by the media coverage thought every single person there had dreadlocks. The media coverage had the effect of making 'ordinary' people stay away and more dreadlocked countercultural types turned up – decreasing the diversity of the protests. More recently, a similar thing has happened in the way in which people drawn to protest sites by the coverage of Swampy they had seen on TV began to replicate in their own lives the attitudes presented by the media as characteristic of the role of the 'eco-warrior'.

"Just as the passivity of the consumer is an active passivity, so the passivity of the spectator lies in his ability to assimilate roles and play them according to official norms. The repetition of images and stereotypes offers a set of models from which everyone is supposed to choose a role." The role of the militant or activist is just one of these roles, and therein, despite all the revolutionary rhetoric that goes with the role, lies its ultimate conservatism. The supposedly revolutionary activity of the activist is a dull and sterile routine – a constant repetition of a few actions with no potential for change. Activists would probably resist change if it came because it would disrupt the easy certainties of their role and the nice little niche they've carved out for themselves. Like union bosses, activists are eternal representatives and mediators. In the same way as union leaders would be against their workers actually succeeding in their struggle because this would put them out of a job, the role of the activist is threatened by change. Indeed, revolution, or even any real moves in that direction, would profoundly upset activists by depriving them of their role. If everyone is becoming revolutionary then you're not so special anymore, are you?

Playing along

So why do we behave like activists? Simply because it's the easy, cowards' option? It is easy to fall into playing the activist role because it fits into this society and doesn't challenge it – activism is an accepted form of dissent. Even if, as activists, we are doing things that are not accepted and are illegal, the form of activism itself, the way it is like a job – means it fits in with our psychology and our upbringing. It has a certain attraction precisely because it is not revolutionary.

We don't need any more martyrs

The key to understanding both the role of the militant and the activist is self-sacrifice – the sacrifice of the self to 'the cause' which is seen as being separate from the self. This, of course, has nothing to do with real revolutionary activity, which is the seizing of the self. Revolutionary martyrdom goes together with the identification of some cause separate from one's own life. An action against capitalism, which identifies capitalism as 'out there' in the City, is fundamentally mistaken – the real power of capital is right here in our everyday lives. We re-create its power every day because capital is not a thing but a social relation between people (and hence classes), mediated by things.

Of course, I am not suggesting that everyone who was involved in June 18th shares in the adoption of this role, and the self-sacrifice that goes with it, to an equal extent. As I said above, the problem of activism was made particularly apparent by June 18th precisely because it was an attempt to break from these roles and our normal ways of operating. Much of what is outlined here is a 'Worst case scenario' of what playing the role of an activist can lead to. The extent to which we can recognise this within our own movement will give us an indication of how much work there is still to be done.

The activist makes politics dull and sterile and drives people away from it, but playing the role also fucks up the activist herself. The role of the activist creates a separation between ends and means: self-sacrifice means creating a division between the revolution as love and joy in the future but duty and routine now. The worldview of activism is dominated by guilt and duty, because the activist is not fighting for herself but for a separate cause: "All causes are equally inhuman."

As an activist, you have to deny your own desires because your political activity is defined such that these things do not count as 'politics'. You put 'politics' in a separate box to the rest of your life. It's like a job... you do 'politics' 9-5 and then go home and do something else. Because it is in this separate box, 'politics' exists unhampered by any real-world practical considerations of effectiveness. The activist feels obliged to keep plugging away at the same old routine unthinkingly, unable to stop or consider, the main thing being that the activist is kept busy and assuages her guilt by banging her head against a brick wall if necessary.

Part of being revolutionary might be knowing when to stop and wait. It might be important to know how and when to strike for maximum effectiveness and also how and when NOT to strike. Activists have this 'We must do something NOW!' attitude that seems fuelled by guilt. This is completely untactical.

The self-sacrifice of the militant or the activist is mirrored in their power over others as an expert – like a religion, there is a kind of hierarchy of suffering and self-righteousness. The activist assumes power over others by virtue of her greater degree of suffering ('non-hierarchical' activist groups in fact form a 'dictatorship of the most committed'). The activist uses moral coercion and guilt to wield power over others less experienced in the theogony of suffering. Their subordination of themselves goes hand in hand with their subordination of others – all enslaved to 'the cause'. Self-sacrificing politicos stunt their own lives and their own will to live – this generates a bitterness and an antipathy to life which is then turned outwards to wither everything else. They are "great despisers of life.., the partisans of absolute self-sacrifice.., their lives twisted by their monstrous asceticism." We can see this in our own movement, for example on site, in the antagonism between the desire to sit around and have a good time versus the guilt-tripping build/fortify/barricade work ethic and in the sometimes excessive passion with which 'lunchouts' are denounced. The self-sacrificing martyr is offended and outraged when she sees others who are not sacrificing themselves. Like when the 'honest worker' attacks the scrounger or the layabout with such vitriol, we know it is actually because she hates her job and the martyrdom she has made of her life and therefore hates to see anyone escape this fate, hates to see anyone enjoying themselves while she is suffering. She must drag everyone down into the muck with her – an equality of self-sacrifice.

In the old religious cosmology, the successful martyr went to heaven. In the modern worldview, successful martyrs can look forwards to going down in history. The greatest self-sacrifice, the greatest success in creating a role (or even better, in devising a whole new one for people to emulate – eg the eco-warrior) wins a reward in history – the bourgeois heaven.

The old left was quite open in its call for heroic sacrifice: "Sacrifice yourselves joyfully, brothers and sisters! For the Cause, for the Established Order, for the Party, for Unity, for Meat and Potatoes!" But, these days, it is much more veiled: Vaneigem accuses "young, leftist radicals" of "enter[ing] the service of a Cause – the 'best' of all Causes. The time they have for creative activity they squander on handing out leaflets, putting up posters, demonstrating or heckling local politicians. They become militants, fetishising action because others are doing their thinking for them."

This resounds with us – particularly the thing about the fetishising of action. In left groups the militants are left free to engage in endless busywork because the group leader or guru has the 'theory' down pat, which is just accepted and lapped up – the 'party line'. With direct action activists it's slightly different – action is fetishised, but more out of an aversion to any theory whatsoever.

Although it is present, that element of the activist role which relies on self-sacrifice and duty was not so significant in June 18th. What is more of an issue for us is the feeling of separateness from 'ordinary people' that activism implies. People identify with some weird sub-culture or clique as being 'us' as opposed to the 'them' of everyone else in the world.

Isolation

The activist role is a self-imposed isolation from all the people we should be connecting to. Taking on the role of an activist separates you from the rest of the human race as someone special and different. People tend to think of their own first person plural (who are you referring to when you say 'we'?) as referring to some community of activists, rather than a class. For example, for some time now in the activist milieu it has been popular to argue for 'no more single issues' and for the importance of 'making links'. However, many people's conception of what this involved was to 'make' links' with other activists and other campaign groups. June 18th demonstrated this quite well, the whole idea being to get all the representatives of all the various different causes or issues in one place at one time, voluntarily relegating ourselves to the ghetto of good causes.

Similarly, the various networking forums that have recently sprung up around the country – the Rebel Alliance in Brighton, NASA in Nottingham, Riotous Assembly in Manchester, the London Underground etc, have a similar goal – to get all the activist groups in the area talking to each other. I'm not knocking this – it is an essential pre-requisite for any further action. But it should be recognised for the extremely limited form of 'making links' that it is. It is also interesting in that what

the groups attending these meetings have in common is that they are activist groups — what they are actually concerned with seems to be a secondary consideration.

It is not enough merely to seek to link together all the activists in the world, neither is it enough to seek to transform more people into activists. Contrary to what some people may think, we will not be any closer to a revolution if lots and lots of people become activists. Some people seem to have the strange idea that what is needed is for everyone to be somehow persuaded into becoming activists like us and then we'll have a revolution. Vaneigem says: "Revolution is made everyday despite, and in opposition to, the specialists of revolution."

The militant or activist is a specialist in social change or revolution. The specialist recruits others to her own tiny area of specialism in order to increase her own power and thus dispel the realisation of her own powerlessness. "The specialist... enrols himself in order to enrol others." Like a pyramid selling scheme, the hierarchy is self-replicating – you are recruited and in order not to be at the bottom of the pyramid, you have to recruit more people to be under you, who then do exactly the same. The reproduction of the alienated society of roles is accomplished through specialists.

Jacques Camatte in his essay 'On Organisation' (1969) makes the astute point that political groupings often end up as "gangs" defining themselves by exclusion – the group member's first loyalty becomes to the group rather than to the struggle. His critique applies especially to the myriad of Left sects and groupuscules at which it was directed but it applies also to a lesser extent to the activist mentality.

The political group or party substitutes itself for the proletariat and its own survival and reproduction become paramount – revolutionary activity becomes synonymous with 'building the party' and recruiting members. The group takes itself to have a unique grasp on truth and everyone outside the group is treated like an idiot in need of education by this vanguard. Instead of an equal debate between comrades, we get instead the separation of theory and propaganda, where the group has its own theory, which is almost kept secret in the belief that the inherently less mentally able punters must be lured in the organisation with some strategy of populism before the politics are sprung on them by surprise. This dishonest method of dealing with those outside of the group is similar to a religious cult – they will never tell you upfront what they are about.

We can see here some similarities with activism, in the way that the activist milieu acts like a leftist sect. Activism as a whole has some of the characteristics of a 'gang'. Activist gangs can often end up being cross-class alliances, including all sorts of liberal reformists because they too are 'activists'. People think of themselves primarily as activists and their primary loyalty becomes to the community of activists and not to the struggle as such. The 'gang' is illusory community, distracting us from creating a wider community of resistance. The essence of Camatte's critique is an attack on the creation of an interior/exterior division between the group and the class. We come to think of ourselves as being activists and therefore as being separate from and having different interests from the mass of working class people.

Our activity should be the immediate expression of a real struggle, not the affirmation of the separateness and distinctness of a particular group. In Marxist groups the possession of 'theory' is the all-important thing determining power – it's different in the activist milieu, but not that different. The possession of the relevant 'social capital' – knowledge, experience, contacts, equipment etc, is the primary thing determining power.

Activism reproduces the structure of this society in its operations: "When the rebel begins to believe that he is fighting for a higher good, the authoritarian principle gets a fillip." This is no trivial matter, but is at the basis of capitalist social relations. Capital is a social relation between people mediated by things – the basic principle of alienation is that we live our lives in the service of some thing that we ourselves have created. If we reproduce this structure in the name of politics that declares itself anti-capitalist, we have lost before we have begun. You cannot fight alienation by alienated means.

A modest proposal

This is a modest proposal that we should develop ways of operating that are adequate to our radical ideas. This task will not be easy, and the writer of this short piece has no clearer insight into how we should go about this than anyone else. I am not arguing that June 18th should have been abandoned or attacked, indeed, it was a valiant attempt to get beyond our limitations and to create something better than what we have at present. However, in its attempts to break with antique and formulaic ways of doing things it has made clear the ties that still bind us to the past. The

criticisms of activism that I have expressed above do not all apply to June 18th. However, there is a certain paradigm of activism which at its worst includes all that I have outlined above and June 18th shared in this paradigm to a certain extent. To exactly what extent is for you to decide.

Activism is a form partly forced upon us by weakness. Like the joint action taken by Reclaim the Streets and the Liverpool dockers – we find ourselves in times in which radical politics is often the product of mutual weakness and isolation. If this is the case, it may not even be within our power to break out of the role of activists. It may be that in times of a downturn in struggle, those who continue to work for social revolution become marginalised and come to be seen (to see themselves) as a special separate group of people. It may be that this is only capable of being corrected by a general upsurge in struggle when we won't be weirdos and freaks any more but will seem simply to be stating what is on everybody's minds. However, to work to escalate the struggle it will be necessary to break with the role of activists to whatever extent is possible – to constantly try to push at the boundaries of our limitations and constraints.

Historically, those movements that have come the closest to de-stabilising or removing or going beyond capitalism have not at all taken the form of activism. Activism is essentially a political form and a method of operating suited to liberal reformism that is being pushed beyond its own limits and used for revolutionary purposes. The activist role in itself must be problematic for those who desire social revolution.

You can contact the author of this piece via: SDEF! c/o Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY, UK.

Support the right to organise
Boycott Colgate Palmolive

THE MISSOURI PRISONERS Labour Union (MPLU) is initiating an international boycott of all products produced directly or indirectly by Colgate Palmolive. This is in response to their failure to support the Missouri Prisoners Labour Union's campaign for a minimum wage for all Missouri Prisoners, abolition of all forced labour and abuse perpetrated by the Missouri Department of Corrections and the State Government, and Colgate Palmolive's active involvement in persuading the State of Missouri Legislature to impose a moratorium on all executions in the state.

In a letter to Colgate Palmolive, MPLU National Communications Officer Michael Lee stated, "Let me reassure you that neither myself or anyone directly associated with the MPLU has any intention of causing physical harm to either Colgate Palmolive employees or property. Our tactic is to simply fold our arms and turn a blind eye to your products."

> The mass industrialisation of prisons is creating an army of doubly-exploited people.

The letter goes on to reiterate what MPLU's elected leadership stated in their April letter to Colgate Palmolive:

> "...we realise that your company didn't put us in prison, but Colgate Palmolive [is] reaping immense profits from our incarceration and you have a social obligation to us. The situation I am outlining is the same argument organised labour has used to oppose sweat shop labour employed by Kathy Lee Gifford, Nike, etc. I would also like to add that we are not asking for anything from society except that we be treated in a fair manner as defined by the United States Constitution and numerous legal cases. We are not advocating a cushy lifestyle but simply a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and a safe, non-abusive work environment."

For better conditions

The MPLU is a 500-member organisation, which was created by prisoners and supporters. It was legally chartered by the State of Missouri in 1998. MPLU's aim is to better the living and working conditions of Missouri prisoners in particular and two million US prisoners in general. In its own words, it:

> "provides a much-needed political forum from which to promote the principles of social justice, economic and political issues confronting Missouri Prisoners and workers. Our commitment to non-violence has been demonstrated continuously. One of the linchpin principles of the MPLU is that there is nothing more powerful then a worker with arms folded, refusing to pick up tools or perform any labour. Since our inception, members have been subjected to all forms of abuse and harassment propagated by the Missouri DoC. On February 17, 2000 President White-Bey was finally released from Administrative Segregation (the hole) after being confined there for almost two years. His offence was simply to advocate that as workers we have the right to organise and the Human and Civil Rights of Prisoners must be respected. Presently several of our members still remain in the hole and are subjected to daily abuse. But the Union rolls on! In this campaign are calling for a moratorium on the continued use of the death penalty. If the State has such a tremendous power then it has the power to perpetrate any abuse on our membership simply for demanding a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Continual use of the death penalty is a human rights violation and an ineffective manner in which to combat anti-social behaviour. For the first time in history, prisoners who do not face the ultimate punishment are calling for a moratorium on its use. We do so as part of our social responsibility as an organisation of economic self-defence and in defence of the human and civil rights of all prisoners. As of July 1, 200 we are requesting that all prisoners and their family/friends, MPLU members and our supporters to non-violently decline to purchase Colgate Palmolive. In support of our efforts we have requested that all members of organised labour, peace and social justice activists and the NAACP to also refrain from purchasing Colgate Palmolive products until at such time our demands are met."

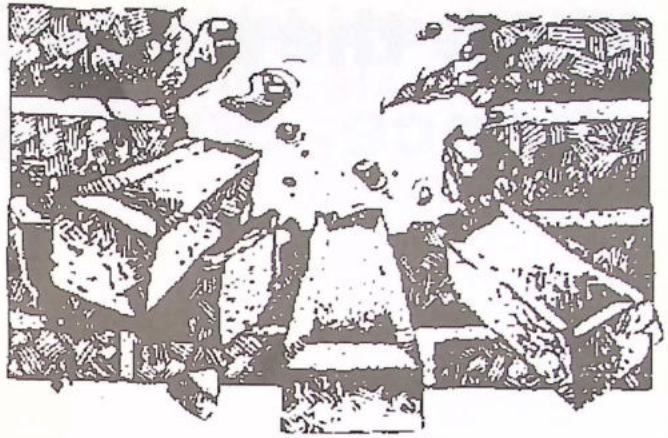
From The Barricades!

***Mike Lee,** On behalf of Raze the Walls!*

Acts of solidarity

Until the walls are razed, the creation of solidarity both within and across them is both the least and the most we can do. The mass industrialisation of prisons, whether private or state-owned, is creating an army of doubly-exploited people and the ruthless punishments handed out to those who resist within and without demonstrate how we are all just a step away from a different kind of hell. Consumer boycotts will not change the fundamental nature of the system but simple acts of solidarity like this, done in a mass way, can bring relief and amelioration to those who suffer intensely in the way MPLU members have and continue to do. Think about it, the next time you buy a simple bar of soap.

Harold H Thompson



Dear Organise!

I send warmest anarchist greetings and friendship from the belly of the beast! I hope this finds each of you in good health and spirit with everything well. I'm in fair health and morale with things going in the usual topsy-turvy fashion of the gulag.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Anarchist Federation and other British anarcho comrades for their display of solidarity, support and love shown by their contributions to the Friends of Harold H. Thompson Support Campaign which I use to fight our sworn enemies in their own backyard, the battlefield of the courtroom, on my own behalf and on behalf of other prisoners.

Soon I will be filing a civil rights complaint against the prisoncrats which I hope will benefit all anarchist prisoners in the States as it will directly address confiscation and seizures of anarchist materials by gulag mailroom personnel and the recent trend of the prisoncrats labeling imprisoned anarchists as belonging to a "security threat group" or "STG" as justification for anarchist material seizures.

For many years I felt as if I was struggling alone and am overjoyed to feel the presence of my beloved anarchist comrades as we indeed have the same goal even though we engage from different aspects in the struggle. I specifically want to thank anarchist comrades Eddy W., Frankie Dee and Catherine K. who have made the Campaign a reality when others had mostly voiced only a willingness to support me.

The only way we will ever rid ourselves of the monster of capitalism is for the many to take our birthright back from the few whose only motivation in life is greed and who profit from our blood, sweat and tears as their kind have done for many generations before us!

Someday the earth will shake with the stamp of our feet as the sleeping giant of the masses arises to deal with them, the air filled with our battle cries as we come! Let one of the battle cries shouted the loudest be: "They will never get us all!" We will carry the torch of our struggle to a victorious end over the monsters of the earth! The earth will be ours and establishment of our anarchist world will dawn a new free era for mankind! Now I dream of such an anarchist world. When many of us share the same dream without letting hope die and who are willing to act then our utopian dream will become reality. Never lose sight of the prize! I will and we will collectively make it happen. We have to do it for the future of this planet, the future of mankind, the future of our children and to rid our company of the monsters of the earth. We will prevail!

I welcome correspondence and will answer each letter I receive, so hope more of like spirit will write me and/or contact Friends of Harold Thompson whose address is PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL England or aplan-harold@hotmail.com. Confusion to our enemies! They will never get us all.

In Anarchist Struggle and Solidarity

Harold H Thompson, #93992
Northwest Correctional Complex
Route 1, Box 660
Tiptonville
Tennessee 38709

Beaten up, fitted up, locked up

THIS IS THE LATEST PAMPHLET from the Justice for Mark Barnsley Group.

It is a comprehensive account of the now infamous 'Pomona Incident', when freelance writer Mark Barnsley was viciously attacked by 15 drunken students out to celebrate the end of their exams.

For those not familiar with the case, these students, who later perjured themselves in court and admitted that they didn't really know why they attacked him, first abused a friend in the Pomona pub in Sheffield while he was inside and then attacked Mark with bottles, knives, glasses and bricks, following him for 150 yards as he tried to escape, repeatedly jumping on him and kicking him whenever he fell.

Yet, it was Mark Barnsley who was charged with assault and jailed for 12 years, an unprecedented sentence for this kind of case. Or is it?

Mark is not liked by the local police for a variety of reasons and the way in which evidence was withheld (and is still being withheld), stories changed or concocted and the attitude of the judge at the trial is a savage indictment of policing in South Yorkshire.

Miscarriage of justice

This publication sets out the facts in great detail and makes the valuable point that middle class people like students, are able to commit very serious offences and get away with them while the working class can be abused, fitted up and jailed on a whim. One of its best parts is the advice it gives to those wanting to help or to protest such miscarriages of justice.

This is the story of determined people: Mark for one, his many supporters for another and should be read by everyone who cares.

£2 from Justice For Mark Barnsley, c/o 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ.

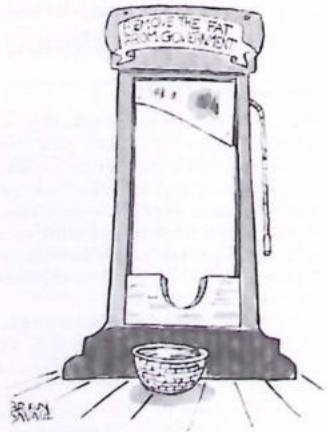
Kids, they don't have a chance, do they?

LITTLE KNOWN AND LESS DISCUSSED in the mainstream media is the state's increasing reliance on imprisonment for an increasing number of the young and children – chiefly working class children.

Last year, the degrading and in many ways terrifying experience of prison caused 60 children, both boys and girls, to try to kill themselves. Sadly, at least five suicide attempts are 'successful' in a year. Five young lives snuffed out every year, prematurely and very needlessly, five out of a growing army of teenagers held in dire conditions and facing blighted lives, many unconvicted, not a few detained illegally.

Cell nightmare

Once inside it's usual to spend 23 hours a day locked up and isolated in a cell, hundreds of miles from home. For a young person brimming with creative energy this must be a nightmare and it isn't difficult to understand why so many make serious attempts to end it. The irony is that fully half of those jailed will finally be acquitted or given non-custodial sentences. So why the wall of silence about the creeping reimposition of the death penalty? Why is nothing said about the State's bloodletting and the way a brutal regime falls so heavily upon young people with no inkling of what they are about to face?



As adults, we have been extensively educated by all kinds of media into the reparation the state will exact when we break its laws. But how could kids ever contemplate such a devastating interruption to their childhood? Even the most hardened adults would find it hard to cope – and many can't. Kids, they don't have a chance, do they?

Yet the incarceration rates for this group are on the increase, actual numbers having doubled to well over 2000 a year since the introduction of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act. These figures confirm Britain's dubious status as the most punitive state in the EU. The 'credit' for this league-topping position goes to politicians (what's new!) like Straw and Widdecombe, forever competing to prove that the one can out-tough the other when it comes to crime even when, as the statistics show, many are acquitted and the re-offending rates remain stubbornly high.

Few rational people believe jail is the place for children or teenagers, yet the courts have fallen over themselves to implement the politician's mantra: "Prison works". The judicial process takes no account of vulnerable children who have themselves been sexually or physically abused, or whose self-destructiveness comes from guilt at not living up to society's demands. Criminals they may be, by the state's laws, but how did they get there? Driven by school and society's leaders to succeed, to make something of themselves, yet their minds and energies blunted by poverty and demoralised by lack of any real prospects, they seek any justification of their 'failure': rejection of society, violence, stealing. Seduced by the siren call of instant gratification and the demand that they consume, is it any wonder they take what society denies them the means to get: power, money, status? Confused, trapped, caught, and condemned with the full rigour of the law, they self-harm in jail and care, desperate to draw attention to the problems they face, most often alone.

How does jail reassure these kids that someone, somewhere in the adult world, where 'experts' supposedly have all the answers actually cares for or about them? Instead of authority ('leaders' and 'experts' again) demonstrating a positive commitment to protecting children from further physical or psychological damage, they are busy throwing them into an environment so bad, so alien, so depressing that bewildered kids, in what should be the 'best days of their lives' reach the conclusion there is only one way out, just one final solution to their awful predicament.

The upholders of a society that is itself the author of practically every social ill that afflicts it like a cancer, need to pause for once in their disease-dispensing judgements, in their headlong rush to sweep out of sight everyone seen as a problem. They need to take a good look around, particularly inwards, and recognise it is they who are poisoning impressionable, developing minds before they have ever been given the chance to taste the love, compassion and solidarity that ought to be the essence of the human condition.

AF pamphlets in other languages

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our *Aims & Principles* are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

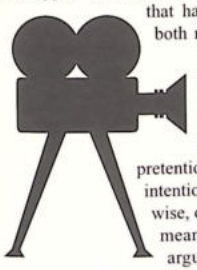
Film and the anarchist imagination

Richard Porton (Verso 1999) pp.314

IT'S QUITE RARE to come across an academic work with anarchism as its subject matter. It is rarer still to find an academic work that exhibits any in-depth understanding of the authentic history and developing theory of anarchism. Most academics don't get past calling the IWW the International Workers of the World. Those who do are usually happy to repeat the lies of the ruling class and to maintain the 'anarchist' caricatures that serve to maintain a false image of what we actually are.

Stereotypes

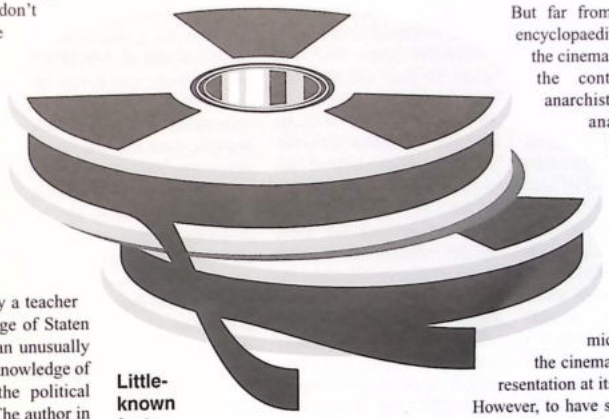
This book, however, written by a teacher of cinema studies at the College of Staten Island in New York, exhibits an unusually deep understanding and wide knowledge of the historic movement and the political arguments within anarchism. The author in fact sets out to consciously deconstruct the stereotypes of anarchism and anarchists that have appeared in both mainstream and 'alternative' cinema.



Extremely readable, the text rarely uses pretentious-git-speak to intentionally, or otherwise, obscure the core meanings of the arguments. The introduction gives a good historical background to the development to anarchist ideas during "…more than a hundred years of labour agitation and revolutionary struggles" (p2), and offers the reader who has not come across anarchism before an informative background to the subject matter of the book.

It is obvious from the beginning that the author actually knows what he's talking about!

There are five sections: Anarchism and Cinema: Representation and Self-Representation; Cinema, Anarchism, and Revolution: Heroes, Martyrs, and Utopian Moments; Anarcho-syndicalism versus the 'Revolt against Work'; Film and Anarchist Pedagogy and The Elusive Anarchist Aesthetic. Each section can be read independently which makes it a great book to dip in and out of.



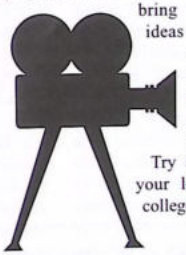
Little-known facts

This reviewer must admit to not having heard of, never mind having seen, many of the films mentioned and it is fascinating to learn that Malatesta, for example, has been the subject of a highly sympathetic movie (Peter Lilienthal's Malatesta, 1971) or that Alexander Berkman unsuccessfully hawked a 'swashbuckling' screenplay based upon Nestor Makhno's life around Hollywood! It's also interesting to see how some film makers who consider themselves 'sympathetic' to anarchism have played a role in reinforcing the stereotype of the anarchist as irrational and impulsive, if not slightly mad (Wertmuller's Love and Anarchy, 1973 for example).

Contradictions

But far from merely being an encyclopaedia of anarchists in the cinema, the book discusses the contradictions within anarchist film-making and anarchists/anarchism as subject matter. Few perspectives aren't tackled intelligently and the research is exhaustive. Critics might suggest that this is a simply an academic exercise and that the cinema is Spectacular representation at its worst.

However, to have such a clued-up and sympathetic text in circulation which may bring revolutionary ideas into areas where they don't usually see the light of day, can only be useful.



Try and get it into your local public or college library.

Anarchism in Japan

The Anarchist Movement in Japan. The fascinating account by John Crump of Japanese anarchism from the late 19th century onwards. Japan had an anarchist communist movement between the World Wars that numbered tens of thousands. £1.80 plus SAE from AF c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Letters from America

Dear Organise,
I am writing in order to respond to the points raised in *Organise!* #53 to our Seattle/WTO report [reprinted from *We Dare Be Free* #6].

Basically, I wanted to first say that this article was not intended to act as a critical analysis of the Battle of Seattle, but rather as a first-hand account of the frontlines of action, written from a militant anarchist perspective.

Outside of the small minority of explicitly revolutionary anti-capitalists (black bloc anarchists, wobblies, Peoples' Assembly, revolutionary socialists, etc.), the Seattle anti-WTO protests contained thousands of demonstrators whose politics ranged from an ultra-conservative protectionism to a well meaning (if not slightly confused) liberal reformism.

It would be entirely false to claim that the protest movement that came out of Seattle was solidly grounded in a class-based, anti-capitalist, anti-State political framework. However, rather than following the lead of many sectarian Leninist groups and denounce this movement on the basis of the political shortcomings of its mainstream participants, many revolutionary anarchists have made it a priority to organise within the direct action wing of the movement (which, though tactically more radical than its mainstream counterparts, still contains a high level of political ambiguity and liberalism, even among many so-called anarchists), and agitate for the sort of revolutionary framework we would like to see this movement eventually embrace on a large-scale.

To some degree, we can begin to see some positive results stem from these efforts. Many seemingly liberal protesters did indeed walk away from Seattle radicalised, and subsequently, as can be seen in the A16 protests that occurred in Washington, DC last April, the globalisation debate has shifted from being simply anti-corporate to questioning all aspects of the capitalism.

Another point that was raised in your editorial was over our acceptance of autonomous acts of resistance that are somehow divorced from the experience of the working class.

Not being one to objectify the working class as some abstract, homogenous entity, I find it difficult to determine the appropriateness of a certain action using such an ambiguous gauge. The United States has a long and illustrious history of class violence, however, I would think that this history is also "divorced from the experience of the working class", as it is constituted today.

I don't know, I come from a solidly working class background, and I personally feel a sense of empowerment when I hear that some exploitative corporation got a firebomb lobbed through their window. If we are to develop a strong culture of resistance within our class, we should be prepared to place these sorts of action within a class perspective where their significance can be understood. Obviously, we need to maintain a definitive stand against irresponsible acts of terrorism where human life is compromised, however, I see little reason why autonomous forms of direct action against the property of the capitalist class should not be supported.

The last point that was brought up was around the question of the left and the unclear usage of this term in our article.

In my opinion, this is a very important point to clarify, since there has been ongoing controversy on both sides of the Atlantic around this subject.

Basically, for me, the left designates a fairly broad tradition of progressive social movements and ideas that embrace some form of progressive social change, economic democracy (socialism), or social justice. To some extent, this could include everything from revolutionary anarchism to classical liberalism to Marxian socialism to single-issue advocacy groups (anti-poverty, environmental, human rights, prison reform, etc).

When I speak about the left-protest movement, in no way is this confined to non-libertarians, but rather to the very broad definition of ALL groups and tendencies that are struggling for some form of social justice or progressive social change (even as fucked as most Marxist-Leninists are, they still convince themselves that they are fighting for an equalisation of classes and some form of socialistic economy). As far as I know, the actual usage of the term predates Marx by at least 50 years.

In this country, there is a growing tendency within the anarchist movement (mainly in the primitivist, green, post-situationist, and individualist anarchist milieus) which calls for an abandonment of the left. What this essentially translates to, as far as I can tell, is an abandonment of direct participation within social movements or popular struggles, in favour of... well, to tell you the truth, I can't quite tell what sorts of options are presented as viable revolutionary alternatives to 'leftism' (other than isolated acts of random rebellion).

Basically, publications such as *Fifth Estate* and *Anarchy*, and writers such as John Zerzan, Hakim Bey, Jason McQuinn, Alex Trotter and Bob Black have used their anti-left position as a platform to attack class struggle anarchism (or 'social anarchism'), specific revolutionary anarchist organisations (Love & Rage), syndicalists (IWW, IWA), social ecologists (Murray Bookchin), and essentially anyone who according to them carries the residue of Marxism (ie class-based politics).

Since Bookchin's *Lifestyle Anarchism vs. Social Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* was published, the anti-left position has become rather popular within a growing number of anarchist circles, especially among younger, counter culture anarchists who see this position as more attractive and accommodating than Bookchin's somewhat rigid form of social anarchism.

Needless to say, the anti-left position has created more than a few obstacles for class struggle politics to take solid root within the anarchist movement here in the States, and comes in direct conflict with groups such as NEFAC who are looking to popularise these politics.

Hopefully it is just a passing trend...

Well, that's about it for now. Solidarity and revolution...

MaRK
(We Dare Be Free, Sabate Anarchist Group, NEFAC)

Dear Organise!
I am writing in response to the article about conservation of land in an anarchist communist society (in issue 53.)

The author is right about the fact that humans are beginning to realise that we do not have unlimited power and that the Earth is indeed more powerful than humans. In the article, the writer tends to refer to humans as 'on lookers' of nature rather than being part of it. They are also right in claiming that we cannot do what ever we want to the environment without repercussions (global warming, the ozone layer etc).

However, in the article, John Miur Trust and the author (for at least some part) accept the definition of wilderness as 'any area with no humans'. This is where they are wrong. The definition they accept is based on the colonialist way of thinking and living. The very term wilderness or the wild was used by colonialists, priests, etc, who believed that any living organisms not under control or dominated by their way of thinking or understanding were chaotic.

The term wilderness also encourages people to believe that somehow living in the suburbs or city is much more civilised than our natural environment. In that type of mind frame believing that humans by their very nature should separate themselves from nature can cause disastrous effects not only to humans but the whole world. The examples are all around us. People of all classes spit, throw trash and graffiti in planters while paying much more respect to the man made things. People erect sidewalks and benches to keep out of the 'dirty ground' as if the Earth is a bad thing. It is the 'dirty ground' which is part of what created us. We are part of the Earth, no matter how much we deny it. Thankfully, more and more people are realising that.

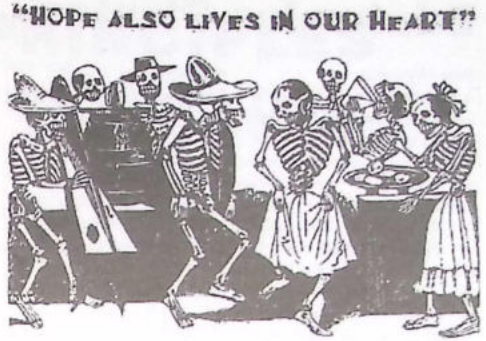
A possible solution to the problem of 'how humans can preserve nature while being able to enjoy them' is to reverse the capitalist way of thinking and domination. What needs to be addressed in our society is that society needs to encourage the person who gives the most as the better way of living rather than the present mode of the person who has the most is the richest. (Fred Charles was a perfect example.)

I do agree with your manifesto that humans must live in harmony with nature and not against it. But it is not enough. If more people could respect trees, plants and animals as equals (since we are no more than hairless apes. No more owning animals as pets and treating trees as only for humans Tecourses) as well as use recycling, solar power, crop rotation and 'industrial symbiosis' many problems would be solved and we would not need the definition wilderness or conservation. We would live co-operatively with nature and treat the environment with equal respect (living with trees, perhaps up in the trees?), less damaging ways of enjoyment with nature may emerge. Even, perhaps, a form of Green Anarchist Communism? I'm looking forward to hearing a response.

In solidarity,
Nick, USA

The author replies:

Dear Nick,
Thank you for your letter. I agree with the points that you make, though I would like to make a few comments.



First, the point I was making about conservation organisations was to actually criticise the concept of wilderness. I was arguing that it is wrong to see humans as something separate from nature, which I think is the way conservationists and environmental campaigners often speak. It is the idea that 'nature' is good and humans are bad outsiders. So, yes, we need to stop seeing ourselves as 'onlookers'.

Second, the John Muir Trust does not really talk about wilderness. 'Wild land' is a more used term in Britain, recognising that people have always had a big impact on the environment. Still, whatever the term, they, amongst others, are trying to preserve areas of the country, that are relatively untouched by humans. I was trying to point out that doing this involves the intervention of human values about what this 'wild land' should actually consist of. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't try and have these areas. On the contrary, creating or conserving areas where other species can flourish without humans all over the place should be one of our goals. This is for the benefit of other species but also for ourselves.

Third, it is not just a capitalist way of 'thinking' that needs to be changed, but the system itself which sees everything on this planet (and off!) as a way of making a profit. And, lastly, yes we do need to have respect for other species, but, unfortunately, it is necessary that we use our habitat for our own benefit. (See article in this issue of *Organise!*) Even your suggestion about us living up trees rather than cutting them down is a problem. Think of how many different species would be losing a home if we moved into the trees! We need to seriously think about ways in which we can reduce the impact of humans, but we can never wholly get rid of it.

Millennium rat

Dear Comrades,
Thank you for the splendid review of *Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat.*

I just want to comment on the adverse criticism, about "gratuitous cartoons about the stout anarchist rat". I reckon anarchists who denounce other anarchists in print deserve to be criticised, and the fat rat cartoon in *Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat* appeared in *Freedom* in response to pamphlets against the organisers of the annual Anarchist Bookfair. (The rat character is more-or-less copied from a drawing by Ronald Scarfe, and does not represent a particular individual.)

Best wishes,
DR

Edelweiss Pirates

Dear Organise!
A few thoughts inspired by the Edelweiss Pirates article in the last issue, and discussions that followed it, on why the working class were subdued in Germany in the 1930s.

I think part of the problem in trying to find worthy moments of working class resistance to Hitler and the Nazis after 1933 might lie in a neglect of a proper understanding of events in Germany from the Revolution of 1918/19 until that date (ie, not going back far enough).

The Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic existed because of the revolutionary insurrection of the German working class at the close of the war. It was, of course, a symbol of the defeat of a revolution, but it was the best that the capitalist class could get away with at the time. If the Weimar Republic had not been created, then Germany probably would have faced an extended civil war, which may have resulted in the complete occupation of the country by foreign powers. Both a civil war and an occupation by foreign powers would have been bad for German business.

But, of course, the Weimar Republic was not a confident beast, and it lurched about all over the place. And, indeed, during the '20s a minor civil war took place anyway, and there were even attempted communist/socialist insurrections by sections of the working class. The *Freikorps* (the Republic's boot boys who were formed from disgruntled reactionary elements in the German army and who were to give the Nazis a good leg up) and others waged a war of assassination against the enemies, as they saw it, of capitalism, that reached quite huge proportions.

The Weimar Republic was not only a symbol of the defeat of a revolution, it was also an expression of the fear that German capitalists had of the class that had given them such a shock at the end of the war. The Republic was a kind of buying off of the liberals (ie the SPD): they got political power, but in return they knew they had to regain control of the working class and create a situation where the economy could get on its feet again.

Indeed, the economy did start to get on its feet for a while, partly due to some crafty accounting by those in the Republic responsible for paying war reparations (I think). But it wasn't enough (especially with the Wall Street Crash) and the very existence of the Weimar Republic itself started to become a liability. Things needed to be speeded up, and revenge had to be exacted. The capitalists had waited for over a decade to get their own back and to finally take charge again of the labouring classes. Political events in the early '30s allowed them to do it. The working class had been effectively defeated many years previously. In the case of targeting militant workers, Hitler and his Party were merely carrying out mopping up operations for the boss class.

By the time Hitler became the democratically elected Chancellor there was little hope of working class resistance and as he tightened his grip there was even less chance. We could compare the situation to Northern Ireland in recent years, where due to the good policing of the working class by the IRA and the British government, there has been virtually no possibility of working class resistance. An unarmed working class will usually find itself at a loss in the face of an aggressive (armed) State (in the case of NI the working class was/is subject to the repressive arms of both the IRA and the UK government).

Of course, there were actions against the Nazis while they were in power, but they were small and isolated and no one would presume that there could have been a toppling of the Nazis by a suddenly rejuvenated working class, who had found some guns and a bag of fertiliser in a lock-up just outside Hamburg. BUT this doesn't mean that reports of resistance to tyranny aren't inspiring, as the Edelweiss Pirates article shows. The problem with trying to put a 'working class' perspective on acts of resistance such as this is that in periods like this the 'conscious working class' element may not be very strong. In human history there are just as many stories of heroic resistance to anti-human things as there are stories of complicity in misery-making and atrocity.

Sometimes the working class in general just doesn't do anything very interesting, but the reason that periods like this exist is always because the working class has done very interesting things in the recent past. So, for example, the state of defeat that the working class in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s found itself in was a direct consequence of the attempts by the ruling class to regain control of the economy and the working class after the revolution of 1918 and 1919. Similarly, the state of defeat that the industrial working class has been enduring since the early 1980s in Britain is a direct result of attempts by the ruling class to regain control after the years of trouble in the 1960s and 1970s.

Proletarian gob

Organise! reply
We find little to disagree with in your analysis of Weimar Germany, the defeat of the German working class or in the role of the Nazis and Hitler.

Having said that, there is every point in making available the history of youngsters like the Edelweiss Pirates. One interesting thing about them is that they had no connection to the older movement. They arose quite independently of it and arose amongst young people who had been brought up under the thumbs of Nazi ideologists. Although they did not develop a political view which we could identify as libertarian communist, their existence did show that even under a dictatorship as brutal as the Nazis, young workers were prepared to rebel.

We take the view that the liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself and that the working class will develop political consciousness as a result of its own struggle. It surely follows for us that the Edwelweiss Pirates' existence and their struggles are in themselves put 'a working class perspective' on what happened in that era. They prove that sections of the working class were not simple dupes and were not impossibly cowed by terror and defeat. The ruling class would like us to believe that this was true. They could not celebrate the actions of thousands of young 'thugs' because they showed up the complicity of the bourgoisie in Hitler's reign.

As the saying goes, from small acorns...

Louis Robertson

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1 The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class.

Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people, may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class.

We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce.

The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow.

Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale.

An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process.

We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Stand and deliver!

Excuse us dear readers. If we could hold you up – in the nicest possible way – for a few minutes and ask you to surrender at least some of the contents of your purses and wallets.

Yes, it's that twice-yearly time when we ask you to hand over your valuables. Well, alright, cheques, postal orders, international money orders will do.

And, unlike Dick Turpin, who just frisked his victims, you know that your contributions will help *Organise!*, your favourite anarchist communist magazine, keep on appearing, as well as helping our publishing programme of pamphlets, our stickers, posters, and the monthly broadsheet of the Anarchist Federation – *Resistance.*

You haven't been too free with your dosh in recent times, so please think about sending money soon. Every contribution, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated.

Contributions to the Press Fund for this issue: £100 (Woking); £20 (Cwmbran); £6 (South Shields); £4 (South London); £3 (North London).

On the web The Anarchist Federation is on the web. *Find us at:* www.afed.org.uk *Email:* anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

Kurt Gustav Wilckens

Organise! continues its series revolutionary portraits, devoted to revolutionaries – some well known, some obscure – who have contributed so much to our movement over the last 120 years.

KURT GUSTAV WILCKENS was born on 3 November 1886 at Bad Bramstedt in Schleswig-Holstein, close to the Danish border in Germany, one of the five sons of August Wilckens and Johanna Harms. Of average height with red hair and light blue eyes, he loved nature and hated cities. Starting work as a miner in Silesia, he emigrated at the age of 24 to the United States where he got work in the Arizona mines.

In Arizona he became involved in the agitation of the revolutionary workers' organisation, the Industrial Workers of the World (popularly known as the Wobblies). Wilckens took part in strikes and became an orator in the miners' mass meetings.

The IWW organised successfully among Mexicans and South Europeans, the lowest paid of the miners. As a result of the growing might of the miners in the Bisbee area, the local businessmen and scab miners organised into Loyalty Leagues. Early on 12 July 1916, 2000 Loyalty Leaguers commenced a round-up of miners. One miner shot dead a Loyalty leaguer in self-defence and was gunned down. There were robberies, vandalism, and beatings and abuse of women carried out by the Leaguers during the round-up. 1,186 men, including 104 Wobblies, among them Wilckens, were herded into cattle trucks and dumped across the border in the New Mexico desert.

Wilckens, by now an anarchist as well as an IWW member, was interned in a camp for German prisoners. He escaped from there, was recaptured and deported to Germany in 1920 from where he departed to Argentina, arriving there in late September.

Here, he got a job as an agricultural worker in Rio Negro, then as a docker in Buenos Aires. He frequented the anarchist bars and centres. On 12 May 1921, he was the victim of a provocation by a cop who attempted to have him expelled from Argentina. This failed, but Kurt spent four months in prison before being freed. At this time, anarchism was strong among the working class of Argentina. After his release from jail Kurt devoted all his energy and money to help his imprisoned comrades.

In the south, in Patagonia, the anarchists had started organising among the agricultural workers of Santa Cruz province and among the workers of the meatpacking plants and ports. General strikes broke out regularly and workers formed themselves into horse-mounted units. Patagonia was experiencing an armed uprising inspired by anarchists. The government sent in the troops and, egged on by the British landowners, 1500 workers, including many anarchists, were rounded up and summarily executed.

The leader of the repression, Colonel Hector Varela, was feted by the British who sang, "For he's a jolly good fellow". The reaction of prostitutes in a local brothel was different, shouting, "Assassins, Pigs! We won't go with killers", when Varela's troops turned up after the slaughter. They were jailed for insulting men in uniform!

Disgusted

Wilckens was disgusted by the murders headed by Varela. He was heavily influenced by the pacifism of Tolstoy, but felt that violence from the ruling class had to be answered. On 27 January 1923, he met Colonel Varela on the street and hurled a bomb at him. Wounded in both legs, Varela attempted to draw his sabre. Wilckens emptied his colt revolver into him, ending the life of this butcher.

Arrested by vigilantes, he bluntly shouted, "I have avenged my brothers". Wilckens insisted that his act was an individual act, with no accomplices. At his trial he stated that he had shot Varela so that he could never kill again.

In jail, Wilckens began to recover from the injuries sustained during the assassination. Anarchists gave great solidarity and he was visited frequently and received food parcels (he was a teetotaller and a vegetarian). He was able to write for various publications, including some international anarchist papers. He explained that he didn't: "see Varela as an insignificant official. No, in Patagonia he was governor, judge, executioner and gravedigger... Tomorrow, our tomorrow will not foster strife, crime and lies; it will foster life, love, science; let us work to speed that day".

Assasinated

The sentence proposed by the judiciary was 17 years in jail. But already the army and the right were plotting. On the night of 15 June 1923, before sentence was passed, prison guards smuggled in Ernesto Perez Millan. This young man, an ex-police sergeant from Santa Cruz province, was a member of the Patriotic League, a reactionary and anti-Semitic organisation formed after the 1919 general strike, with the backing of the army, the Church and the employers. He had sworn revenge at Varela's funeral. He shot Wilckens through the chest. The bullet pierced a lung but did not kill him outright. He died the following morning.

The police and the government confiscated his body, but news spread and an unlimited general strike broke out throughout the country. The police fired on a mass demonstration in Once Square. Two workers were shot dead, including the Spanish anarchist Enrique Gombas, and one cop. Millan himself did not long survive the murder. The authorities made out he was unbalanced and had him put in a secure mental hospital. Here, he was gunned down by a Yugoslav midget!

Wilckens had acted in a time of great social strife and class war. A gentle and idealistic man of great integrity, he expressed immense solidarity. His disgust at the massacre of workers had forced him to act.

ORGANISE!

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

ISSUE 55
1.50
FREE COPIES TO PRISONERS

SAVAGE IDEAS?

INSIDE:

Kropotkin.
Esperanto.
Mental Health.
Land & Ecology.
Prisoners.
Letters.

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published twice a year in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to publish articles that fall within the political scope of our Aims and Principles. Having said that, agreement with our A&Ps does not mean that there is no more room for debate. The articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective view of the Anarchist Federation. This is, for example, true of the article, Land and Ecology. Others, like the Esperanto and Mental Health articles are obviously intended to provoke discussion and make readers stop and think for a moment. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

Once again, we have included a number of articles from people outside the AF. These include a major article on Kropotkin, an anarchist from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and an article on the US anarchist scene. We hope that others will take the opportunity to contribute articles that meet the broad editorial objectives of *Organise!* If you would like to contribute, but are unsure how to do so, then get in touch first.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in October. Articles and letters for inclusion should be sent to us by July 31st.

All contributions for the next issue should be sent to: AF, c/o Box 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if articles could be sent either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles and letters can be emailed to us at: anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

What goes in *Organise!*: *Organise!* hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the articles and nobody else. If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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Organise! index: A list of the articles, reviews and letters from *Organise!* issues No 14-No 43. Send a Press Fund donation payable to AF, to AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

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Organise! back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE. Issues 1-26, 28, 30-36 & 42 are sold out.

Issue 27: LA Riots' Yugoslavia, Malcolm X
Issue 29: Debate on the unions, Italian workers organise
Issue 37: Pornography, Booze, cigs and dope, Moral panics
Issue 38: Militarism, myth of overpopulation, Castro
Issue 39: Prisons, Algeria, Heritage
Issue 40: Work, Job Seekers Allowance, Art As A Weapon
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Issue 47: Che Guevara, Syndicalism, Community Organisation
Issue 48: French Unemployed, Haile Selassie, Revolutionary Unions?
Issue 49: Mental illness and social control, Bradford 98
Issue 50: Land, Italian anarchists, Abortion, Ireland
Issue 51: GM Foods, Who owns the land, War in Kosovo, Ireland — the 'Peace' Process
Issue 52: War in Kosovo, Roots of our movement, Land and Freedom, East Timor
Issue 53: Mass Direct Action, East Timor, Youth Resistance to the Nazis, Workplace Notes.
Issue 54: Civil war in Colombia, Humans and Animals, Giving up Activism, Dissent

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything, plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Some comments & *observations*

Organise! *editors' comment:*
This article is written by Ronald Young. He is a prisoner in the USA and is the editor of a magazine Chain Reaction. *The article arrived just too late for the last issue of* Organise! *and was actually written prior to the events of S26. Obviously then, the article reflects Ronald's own views and not those of the AF. We do, however, find his views and analysis of interest and wish to share them with our readers. Anyone who wishes to do so can write to him at the address at the end.*

The American anarchist movement is once again at an historic crossroads. One hundred years ago it was at its height of popularity only to be crushed by authoritarian 'red scare' tactics and war hysteria. Today the anarchist movement is once again gaining in popularity, not just in America but across the globe. And once again, history is attempting to repeat itself as elements both within and without seek to destroy anarchism before it has a chance to reestablish itself among the working class of the world.

The forces outside of the anarchist movement that seek to destroy it are fairly obvious for the most part. It is the insidious counter-revolutionary forces residing 'inside' the anarchist movement that has the greatest potential for diverting us from our primary goal of agitating for world social revolution. It is these forces which are the main focus of this commentary.

Primitivists

The primitivists advocate the infantile notion that we can just throw away all technology and return to a 'wild' state of existence. One of their tenets is the silly idea that humanity should abandon the cities and move back to the hinterlands. If I'm not mistaken, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge attempted to do this in Cambodia, resulting in two million or more deaths. Besides the possible cost in human lives from such a scheme, can you imagine the environmental devastation resulting from the six billion inhabitants of earth all defecating in the wilderness without the beneficial 'technology' of treatment facilities to process the billions of tons of waste? What do the primitivists intend to do with it all, recycle it into organic farming operations? I can think of no better way to transmit untold numbers of deadly pathogens among the population than to use untreated human waste as a crop fertilizer. If I'm missing something here, please, somebody enlighten me and I will stand corrected.

It would be a horrendous act of stupidity for humanity to just blindly abandon all forms of technology, transforming ourselves back into the presumably 'feral' creatures we once were. Taken to an extreme, we would have to get rid of every contrivance created since the dawn of humanity. It's obvious that much of the primitivist dogma is derived from Luddism and the radical environmentalism of groups such as Earth First! and they are attempting to use anarchism as the vehicle to advance their agenda.

I'm the first to agree that anarchism must contain a critique of the inter-relationship we have with the environment and ways to best protect it, ensuring the survivability of the human species as well as the diverse fauna and flora of the planet. But it would be contrary to anarchist principles to adopt an 'earth first' ideology that places 'saving the earth' above saving humanity. The earth isn't a conscious being that cares whether or not it is 'saved'. Only humans have the conscious capacity to care about the future of the environment — best viewed as what might be considered the selfish act of 'saving our own skins'. If humanity wishes to continue inhabiting this planet, we can do so only if the environment remains healthy enough to sustain us. However, the environmental extremists who would disregard human suffering in favour of the planet do not belong in an anarchist movement whose fundamental goal is the betterment of the human condition. Such elitists must be roundly repudiated.

Also related to the primitivists are the Animal Liberation Front and its various offspring. It is admirable that humans have evolved to the point where they actually care about the rights of animals. But I for one (here I go stepping on some more toes) believe it is quite absurd to give animals 'equal rights' to those of humans. Yes, we must do all that we can to eliminate cruelty to animals and provide them with humane, dignified living conditions. But I stop short of demanding an all-out ban on the human consumption of meat, though I admit that most poultry, dairy, cattle and hog operations practice inhumane and environmentally destructive methods of production which should be seriously scrutinised.

To move to the world envisioned by primitivists would be to live in a land of disease and death, not one of health and happiness, as these well-meaning but misguided souls would have us believe.

PPWC, cross-class movements and creeping liberalism

Moving on to my next subject of contention, I want to make some comments and observations concerning a group called the Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC) founded by Ali Khalid Abdullah. Ali claims to be an anarchist, yet his PPWC likes to consider itself all-inclusive of various liberals, progressives and an array of native American and black nationalist movements.

Ali is very articulate in his anti-capitalist critique and I agree with many of the points he makes. He also appears to being doing an excellent job in organising numerous chapters of PPWC. But some of Ali's writings are punctuated with references and support for the New Afrikan Movement. This movement appears to embrace the ideas of separatism and nationalism, two ideas which I believe run counter to the principles embraced by most anarchist communists. Let me make one thing perfectly clear. I do believe that the struggle waged by various oppressed racial and ethnic groups against capitalism may require them to form separate organisations at various times to address their special circumstances. But these organisations must also recognise that in order for the social revolution to be successful, all ethnic and racial groups will at some point need to form integrated coalitions whose aim is to achieve a worldwide revolution that ultimately puts an end to all divisions within the international working class — whatever those divisions may be.

You may or may not have seen a recent article of Ali's entitled "Why aren't there more anarchists of color?" Ali, who himself is black, doesn't offer any definitive answers to this question other than to chastise the anarchist movement for being too white and living in communities disconnected from people of colour. Perhaps there is some merit to this, but I believe the reasons are slightly more complicated than the simplistic notion that anarchists aren't doing enough to reach out to people of colour. And we will only begin to address the problem when we move away from simplistic excuses and begin a serious analysis of the situation. There are anarchist groups here in the States which I know are involved in black and Latino communities. Unfortunately, Ali wasn't very specific in just what elements of the anarchist movement he was addressing, other than one mention of an Oregon group's failure to specifically mention racial oppression in its literature.

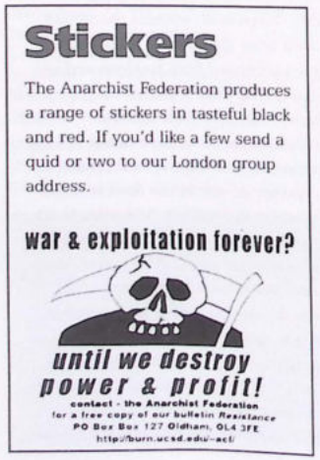
The ruling class uses the fear of unemployment and deprivation to play off working class groups against each other.

There are no doubt many people of colour who perceive the anarchist movement as generally being a white movement and who may be skeptical as to whether or not anarchist groups will be receptive to addressing the issues of racial and ethnic exploitation in addition to the issue of economic exploitation. These are serious reservations which must be overcome by providing a thorough analysis of capitalism and showing that its exploitative nature of one group (the ruling class) dominating another (the working class) manifests itself in all aspects of society, including race relations. The ruling class uses the fear of unemployment and deprivation to play off various working class groups against one another. It is this division that keeps the ruling class in power. This is the message we need to be sending to all members of the international working class.

To me, Ali is hinting at the notion that anarchists must embrace nationalist and cross-class movements simply because they may contain an anti-racist or 'liberation' dimension. The anarchist movement must be dedicated to eliminating racism, but it must do so within the context of agitating for revolutionary anarchism communism. It is detrimental to the overall goal of social revolution to focus on single issues, without placing them within the wider context of a complete anarchist critique of capitalism. It will be equally devastating for anarchists to wander into the quagmire of nationalist politics.

Stickers

The Anarchist Federation produces a range of stickers in tasteful black and red. If you'd like a few send a quid or two to our London group address.



We must support all people's rights to self-defence against exploitative forces, but we must not support nationalist tendencies that fall short of embracing the idea of an international working class and worldwide social revolution. It's perhaps possible that some social revolutionary movements may first appear having nationalist tendencies but have as their goal international working class solidarity. To garner support from anarchists, these groups must make it clear that it's their overall objective to link-up with other revolutionary movements for the complete global overthrow of the capitalist system and establishment of a worldwide libertarian-egalitarian society free of artificial borders.

Ali makes a valid point in his article when he says anarchists must be actively involved in communities of colour and the struggle against police brutality and racial profiling. However, when it comes to being involved in any sort of mass demonstrations, anarchists must be watchful about who we are aligning ourselves with and what are their motives. Case in point: the movement against racial profiling by the police doesn't necessarily agitate for the complete dismantling of the State and its coercive police forces that in reality oppress us all, though some groups may be more oppressed by the police apparatus than others. The goal of the liberal reformists in this case is to make police oppression more equitable. It's not the repressive methods of the police, per se, that these groups find appalling so much as the 'selective' use of those methods.

The American anarchist movement, in particular, has not been very discerning of these sometimes subtle, yet fundamental, differences anarchists have with other social movements. We must be careful about marching in every band simply because it opposes police brutality or racial profiling. Left unchecked, this creeping infiltration of single-issue reformism will eventually turn anarchist agitational efforts into a mishmash of watered-down liberalism. It will have the effect of destroying the social revolution while still in its embryonic stage.

While we may be anxious to increase the ranks of anarchists, let's not be so blind and gullible as to allow just any old thing to be passed off as anarchism simply because it addresses a social wrong. Let us not be fearful that our criticism of reformism will be viewed as politically incorrect or cause a reduction in our numbers. Yes, anarchists must fight for better conditions today. But you are aware, just as I am, that reforms achieved today can easily be taken away tomorrow. Reforms are a quick fix — a stop-gap measure, if you will. But they also have the tendency to act as safety valves, giving renewed life to the exploitative forces we are working so hard to destroy. So we must stand our ground, not losing sight of our ultimate revolutionary goals or allowing the anarchist movement to be co-opted by reformists. The anarchist movement has no need for liberals and reformists; we need people who are dedicated to international working class solidarity and the complete overthrow of capitalism and the State. We need people who have thrown off the shackles of believing that either can be reformed and made friendlier to the working class.

I don't advocate that we agitate purely in the abstract without getting involved in concrete direct actions. The point I make, which I hope is clear, is that anarchists must always operate within the realm of achieving a social revolution for the betterment of the working class and thus all of humanity, not merely reacting to each provocation from the State in a way that diverts our scarce resources from the business we need to be about — achieving anarchy.

Part of the problem is that various anarchist groups want to be seen as socially active and not just sitting around sipping on a cold brew discussing theory. And it's absolutely imperative that anarchists become active in the social affairs of our respective communities. There's nothing wrong with agitating at the grassroots level provided we stay focused on the big picture. We must agitate for anarchism and attack the problems we face using the principles of anarchism as our guide. Anarchists must be careful that we don't find ourselves advocating for 'equality of oppression', instead of the abolition of oppression. It appears that in many instances anarchists are doing just that, though they may not be fully conscious of the fact because they are still carrying baggage from their pre-revolutionary class struggle days of liberalism. It's time to toss that baggage overboard so we are unimpeded in our journey to achieving the social revolution.

'Anarchist chic'

The anarchist movement is experiencing a rekindled interest among the masses, especially among the younger generations. Anarchism's hope for success lies in its ability to attract young people who are truly interested in attaining working class consciousness and maturing in their understanding of anarchist communism and its critique of capitalist society. But there is also a danger to the anarchist movement from those persons who are simply interested in being 'anarchist chic'. They think it's cool to wear black, mask-up for street demonstrations,

There's nothing wrong with spontaneity but organisation is also necessary.

destroy corporate property and spray paint circle-A's (and they are right to think it's cool), but aren't firmly grounded In the principles of anarchism.

Then there are those anarchists who take the concept of anti-authoritarianism to the extreme notion that we must be 'disorganised' and move from one demonstration to the next without any sense of direction. Each affinity group just

'doing their own thing' isn't going to win anarchists the social revolution. There's nothing wrong with spontaneity but organisation is also necessary. Yes, it's true that anarchists believe in autonomy and free association. But anarchists also believe in the idea of federation and working class solidarity. If we can't get our act together at the small scale we are

It will take a federated, 'organised' effort to win the revolution.

currently operating, how can we hope to achieve world revolution and create a system of distribution for the planet's six billion inhabitants?

This doesn't mean that every act of every group must always be scrutinised by every other group and voted on, as some libertarian socialists have recently commented. But there should be a continuity and overall purpose to our actions that contributes to our ultimate goal of world revolution. And when it comes to coordinating our efforts on a larger scale we will meet with utter failure without an organisational structure.

I embrace the concept of affinity groups and local autonomy. Small intimate groups know best the needs and nuances of their communities, and also reduce the possibility of infiltration by counter-revolutionaries.

But it will take a federated, 'organised' effort to win the revolution. To quote Alexander Berkman, "Any one who tells you that anarchists don't believe in organisation is talking nonsense. Organisation is everything and everything is organisation" (*The ABC of Anarchism*). We must formulate a cohesive methodology, if you will, that takes the anarchist movement from a series of disconnected events and random acts of defence, and moves us toward a proactive, offensive posture.

Instead of waiting for a meeting of the capitalists, at which we demonstrate, blockade and riot, it's time to carry out our own events. While we're taking it to the streets we must also agitate and organise for the mother of all direct actions — the global general strike, which will be the defining moment that brings capitalism and the State to its knees. Anarchist must also prepare to defend the revolution against acts of violence by the State's police and military forces in attempts to break the strike.

While a general strike on a global scale seems fanciful at the present time, it is toward such a culminating future event that all current direct actions should converge. The problem, as things now stand, is that between J18 N30, A16, May Day 2000, etc., there is too much lag time where passions are allowed to cool. The momentum is not being carried over from one action to the next. When we have the world's attention we must seize that opportunity and not allow a kcooling off period where the movement ends up floundering.

And while I'm on the subject of direct actions and street demonstrations, I'd like to say a couple of things about the upcoming S26 demonstrations in Prague. It has been reported that the protesters are likely to face an army of 11,000 police backed by 5,000 military personnel. This is a prime example of how the oppressed can easily become the oppressor. Apparently Czech President Vaclav Havel has forgotten about the days when he was an outlaw in the Charter 77 Movement, but has remembered remarkably well the tactics of oppression used by the invading Soviet forces during the Prague Spring of 1968. Czech police kicked and beat with truncheons May Day demonstrators and were in Washington DC on A16 to get first-hand training in American methods of repression.

This is how 'democracy' is being enforced by the capitalist powers. The authorities make much of the fact that street demonstrations and rioting are not 'democratic' methods for redressing grievances against the State, but fail to also mention that the global financial and corporate institutions which are backed by the police powers of the respective capitalist states are neither popularly elected or supported by the majority of the people. They are nothing but dictatorships ruling the world through the iron fist of brutal repression.

Conclusion

The world is once again awakening to anarchism. A golden opportunity lies before us, which may not happen again for another hundred years, if ever. We can squander the moment or seize it and make this century and this millennium the age of anarchism. We must be willing to be critical of those people who claim anarchy in name only. The winnowing process must begin to separate the wheat from the chaff — to separate the cultists and the faddists from the revolutionaries who are in this for the long haul of achieving the social revolution.

Anarchists must not allow the reformists and cross-class movements to co-opt the growing anticapitalist movement. We must do all that we can to inflame the passions of the working class in favour of anarchism. Anarchists must rise above the idiotic notion that to focus, organise and guide our movement is somehow lowering ourselves to becoming Leninists or authoritarians. Yes, we must guard against vanguardism in its strictest sense, but also not be afraid to challenge the notion that to act in an organised, unified and concerted effort is somehow selling out our anarchist ideals. It's not.

I don't claim to hold all the answers. There is much I still need to learn but I also hope that I will be able to make some positive contributions as to how to get where we need to go. For the time being I present these comments and observations to you so that they may be critiqued as to whether or not I'm moving in the proper direction or merely suffering from an extremely hot Texas summer.

Forward to anarchist communism

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The land and ecology

Scientific fact proclaims the existence of an ecology of which we are a part. No system of ethics or morality, except the diseased mythologies of fascism, can justify human existence in the present if humanity fails to exist in the future. Capitalism will either destroy humanity by destroying its ecological niche or it will destroy humanity by changing it. From these three statements comes an inescapable conclusion: that the class war is also a war of ecological survival.

Are we the problem?

Of course working class cultures created or maintained by capitalism are part of the problem. As previous articles in *Organise!* have shown, some members of the working class enjoy wantonly destroying the environment, whether shooters and hunters, trail-bikers or off-road drivers. We consume our environment in the same way and for the same reasons we consume capitalism's goods. We appear happy to see mountains quarried for stone and the holes turned into landfill, forests planted and felled to feed our craving for newsprint, furniture and packaging. We sometimes side with the rural owning class against our best interests. Two-thirds of Scottish rural households have an income below the poverty line, yet continue to defer to the local ruling class. We grub up hedges, spray pesticides or let useful land lie fallow because someone pays us to do it. That who we are is a social construct created by capitalism to suit its needs, not ours, is the cause of this false consciousness and revolutionary consciousness the solution. No people at any time, in any place have truly "walked light on the land". We have all inflicted ourselves upon the land and the ecology it is part of as much as our greed, our desires and our technological capacity have allowed. If these impacts were historically relatively small, so what you could ask? It is today and tomorrow that matters. We have used as much of the world's resources since 1950 as the whole of the human race did in its entire existence up to that point. Capitalism's point of no return has already been reached; it will die or be radically changed. How many of us will die in the process is the question.

A new Holocaust of the ecologies

Capitalism has created the Spectacle to seduce us, it has appropriated all the planet's resources and built a vast machinery of control, including states, governments, armies, death-squads, laws, judges, policemen, prisons, gulags, advertising, schools, socialisation, madhouses and the whole process of production and consumption, in order to protect and extend that grand larceny. And to be precise, by capitalism we mean capitalists, real people running real governments and corporations, in huge mansions, wielding vast and shadowy powers. People with great wealth and no ethics, people for whom personal aggrandizement expressed in profit, status or authority is too powerful an opium. The effect of this is the wholesale destruction of the planet's biological and social ecologies, the mass holocaust of the poor, in which disasters are only the most visible events in an unrelenting carnage of wars, starvation, pandemics, crippling disease, ignorance, riot and pogrom. A jungle cleared, a shanty bulldozed, a golf course built on sacred land, farms drowned beneath a reservoir, chemical spills into water systems, toxins into the air from urban incinerators. These are not environmental events alone, they are social and economic events, they are battles lost in a class war, if the working class is those who must endlessly produce and yet have no say over what is produced and how. Every year, 900m die of hunger in a world even the despised UN says could support 14bn people. Is this just drought and famine, environmental events? Or is it because

people have been cleared from the land, forced to work for pennies, droughts caused by massive dams or to fill the swimming pools and water the gardens of the rich?

The environment was and is an area of working class struggle because it is we who suffer most from environmental degradation and expropriation of land, water and clean air. Boycotts of dam projects, nuclear power stations, forest clearances, heavy industry (for instance in Thailand where a riot by 100,000 people halted a steel-making project), dumping of toxins and waste have been social as well as environmental victories for the working class. Early socialists argued strenuously that political and economic struggle was the means to achieve environmental reform. Revolutionaries like William Morris and Kropotkin proposed sustainable economies that were also socially just. The land would be a vast granary, water would run clean and food would be pure, free from chemicals and adulteration. Environmentally-caused diseases like cholera, diphtheria and typhus would be eliminated. These programmes of reform grew out of the unrelenting struggle of working class people against bosses and owners, struggles to defend their place within ecologies (such as resistance to clearances or enclosures) or to improve environments that capitalism had ruined (for instance campaigns for clean water, decent housing and sanitation). Their struggle brought reforms, such as nationalised water companies, but because they did not change the nature of either ownership or control, they were temporary. The same struggles are being waged by the working class in its millions today but most are led by reformist leaders. The anti-capitalist movement must re-learn, as the global poor already know, that the revolution must be made by us, here, on the land and in the towns, and not by campaigns against far-off institutions like the WTO or UN or without an end to private property or (so-called) democratic control.

The engine of environmental destruction is capitalism, with its iron laws of expropriation, exploitation and despoliation. The petrol is private property, which includes private and state ownership — in essence, the same since the state exists to protect private property and periodically redistribute it between owning classes. The state exists to preserve the vast inequalities in how global resources are shared out. And with what result? 125 wars in the developing world since the 1950s, killing over 20m people. Fierce wars for land in Palestine, Zimbabwe and Brazil. Between 1975 and 1985, the number of urban Third World poor without access to safe water increased by 100m. Water wars rage in South Asia, the Middle East and Central America. Water speculators in the city of Guayaquil sell water to the poor for 400 times the price paid by volume consumers like factories. While the rich use 300 litres a day, the poor get less than 25. This is not a modern phenomenon. The imposition of free market economics on colonial territories in the 19th century massively increased death tolls from drought and monsoon: as many as 18m died in India and China alone in two years in the 1870s. Famine in China sparked the Boxer Uprising. 'Modernisation' caused village stocks of grain to be centralised in the Indian Empire and then exported to England whenever there were bad harvests. When famine struck, the colonial administration raised prices beyond the reach of the peasants who starved, fled the land or turned to banditry and even cannibalism. Money sent by European governments for relief often ended up funding increases in local military establishments and 'bush wars' against colonial rivals or were pocketed by the colonial merchant and ruling classes — the very crimes that the Iraqi state is accused of today. Despite a decades-long effort to 'civilise' and 'develop' India, there was no increase in the per capita income of people between 1757 and 1947. Wealth flowed in both directions but did not pass out of the hands of the ruling classes into that of the peasantry. And the same is happening today. The Advance Brazil plan will spend £27bn to develop Amazonia, destroying 95% of the rainforest by 2020; how much of this will create sustainable economies and ecologies which truly benefit ordinary people? And if they protest, the iron laws of capitalism — ownership, property rights, laws — will be used against them. The 'right' to use and exploit is created by ownership and defended by privilege, law, custom and power. Whether Scottish croft, Colombian forest or Turkish homeland, power confers ownership which in turn creates wealth; wealth produces a corrupted system of judges, lawyers and bailiffs to protect and extend ownership which over time creates a privileged class — privileged to use the state to protect its interests.

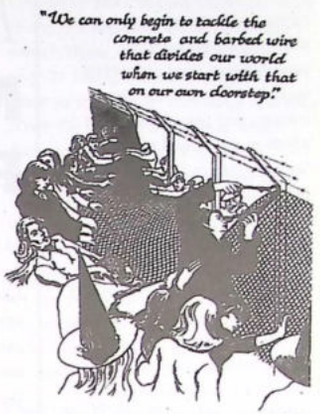
The recent foot and mouth 'epidemic' is a massive abuse of animals and the land caused by the pursuit of profit. Infected swill from schools, probably arising from the cheap imported meat schools use (cost-cutting before children's health), was fed to pigs because it was cheap. Infected and disease-free animals were taken to large agri-business holding stations — the weak or unwanted were sold in local markets, spreading infection. They were then transported hundreds of miles to fattening stations and mixed with other animals even though it is well known that livestock transported long distances are very susceptible to disease. Some were exported to Europe, others sold after fattening to the abattoirs and then into the food chain. This industrial agriculture is forced upon farmers by a capitalism that must offer ever cheaper goods to survive and the greed of the supermarkets for profit and market share. What is truly amazing is that foot and mouth disease cannot infect humans and does no more harm to animals than minor sores and milk that can't be used and wears off after a few weeks. In the 19th century and abroad farmers simply let the disease burn itself out after killing very few animals. Why is it different in these islands? Because the supermarkets will not buy infected meat and farmers will not pay

to feed a cow that even temporarily produces no milk. Foot and mouth was not a natural disaster, it was an economic disease, killing profits but of no harm to animals or humans. One million healthy, disease-free sheep were killed to protect the profits of the supermarkets and agri-businesses, the ultimate indictment of capitalist profit motive and methods of organisation. Strangely, the animal rights and environmental campaigners stood silent, arms folded while supposedly right-wing farmers threatened outright defiance of the law; an encouraging development. Are ten thousand foxes or lab rats worth more than 1m sheep, animals that could feed and provide wool to millions? Or is the liberal reformist critique of capitalism still incomplete, ignoring the exploitation and captivity of the working class as either producer or consumer, in favour of opposing one kind of cruelty (in field and laboratory) but not other kinds (in abattoir and rendering plant)?

Globalisation and free trade are forcing intense farming methods on farmers with disastrous consequences. In 1999, 200,000 farmers in Europe gave up the unequal struggle and big business moved in. Ten companies worldwide control 60% of the food chain. Four of them control the world supply of corn, wheat, tea, rice and timber. Massive subsidies, paid for by taxes on wages and non-agricultural businesses, swell the profits of the biggest farms and agricultural businesses, usually owned by large multi-national corporations — in the US, a total of $22bn. While western capitalism demands subsidy worth $362bn per year, the farmers of the rest of the world share just $18bn — if they can't compete, they are accused of inefficiency by western 'experts' and legislated out of existence or driven to the wall by 'free and fair' competition.

Environmental class war

We must first target the means by which environmental degradation occurs. Whatever the label, whether irrationalism, neo-Luddism or propaganda by the deed, direct action against the means of environmental destruction and degradation is an act of resistance and ultimately one of the means by which revolution is realised. Resistance takes familiar forms. The first industrial working class wrecked mines and broke weaving frames in the 1740s, spinning machines in the 1770s, agricultural machinery in the 1810s, forms of resistance that continued all through the 19th and 20th centuries and which the working class of the developing world are using every day. It is a form of resistance embraced by the direct action movement. But we need to go further, much further. Isolated actions are no good, we need a programme and the means to achieve it. Since ownership always creates owners, masters, we must socialise the land. Use of land and resources cannot be based on singular or personal 'rights' but on the utility and social benefits such use creates. We have to stimulate and support movements for radical land reform (i.e. changes to both ownership and use) which have expropriation and socialisation as both their end and their tactic: squatting must become a rural as well as an urban phenomenon. Our aim should be to drive farmers who are abusing the land off the land, leaving it for us to reclaim. We must tie popular boycotts of retailers who sell non-organic/GM food to occupations, squats and mass trespasses, to drive those who refuse to change off the land. The HLS campaign is a model we need to spread. If we wish to change land use, as a challenge to capitalism now, then making it economically difficult to continue with environmental destruction, driving agri-business off the land and occupying and squatting empty buildings, rural and urban, together with a revival and radicalisation of the commune movement needs to be undertaken far more often. A movement to occupy empty rural and small village buildings, especially second and holiday homes, coupled with squats of urban housing (both new and old) and occupations of planning and developer offices would link rural and urban homeless and be a powerful challenge



to the state's defence of property. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of unused or misused land and tens of thousands of unused buildings across the country. We should make room within this movement for those who want to build within capitalism as well as destroy it. We must learn how to make society work, practically; 'green gatherings' with a revolutionary intent and without the pacifism and mysticism; radical communes that teach as well as shelter. We shouldn't regard it as reformism so long as we do not get trapped within capitalism's property relations and all understand that the places we create now will be socialised in the future.

The land and us

We cannot change the laws of nature but we can change conditions of existence. We have been predators but in the main do not kill as often as we did. We defend the means of our existence (the land, the crops, waterways) but can limit the impact of our actions radically. While we (collectively and individually) will continue to defend our existence (for instance by limiting the impact of insects on crops), we will do it from necessity, humanely and rationally, and in ways which do not adversely effect the environment — i.e in ways which are unnecessary or not easily renewable or which disadvantage non-proximate life. Think organic, low-impact farming won't work? A recent study of sustainable agriculture using

low-tech methods introduced on farms supporting 4m people in majority world countries revealed that food production increased 73%, crops like cassava and potato showed a 150% increase and even large 'modern' farms could increase production 46%. In Brazil, farmland the size of India is left untilled while 20m rural poor have no land at all. The future occupation and use of land will depend on the extent to which all who wish to do so have discussed and consented to such use, that those occupying or using the land continue to work in solidarity with the whole of society within broad principles of co-operation, sharing freely both the means of production and what is produced. No individual or group of individuals will have any 'right' to say "the land must be used in the way we decide", nor can what is on or under the land or produced upon it be their property, whether plant or animal. The number of people involved in agriculture (in its widest sense) will probably expand greatly, with vast estates and agri-corp holdings broken up and shared out, but also urban farms created in and near towns. The aim of agriculture (and activities like food processing) will be self-sufficiency for the localities and specialisation or growing for 'export' only where there is surplus land or productive forces. It is likely that neighbours, co-workers, communities and communes will collectively agree to use land in particular ways according to a plan or programme of beneficial change. This will not always be in the direction of development or 'efficiency' (which will have different definitions and parameters anyway); if people need more gardens or wilderness, small-holdings instead of sheep stations, they will create them.

Interview with McDonald's Workers' Resistance

McDonald's Workers' Resistance (MWR) is a group of politically aware workers who have taken the bold decision to organise a workplace group in their store in Glasgow. The first issue of their piss-take newsletter McSues *appeared recently, and while aimed at McDonald's employees, is accessible to anyone with experience of the service sector. Looking to spread their message and link up with other groups, they participated in this interview for* Organise! *There is much that other workers can learn from their example.*

***Organise!:* Initially, how did the MWR group come together? Was it politically motivated or 'economically', i.e. through the need to organise for improved working conditions?**

MWR: There were specific issues at our store that were pissing people off, for example we were due hundreds of pounds in unpaid bonuses. At the same time a group of us, who over the years had become close friends, got talking and decided to try and take the informal resistance that we'd practised for years a stage further. A number of us were already influenced by radical politics so you could say it was politically motivated. At present our ability to influence our economic circumstances is limited, so that was possibly less of a motivation.

***Organise!:* How successful had your tactics been in improving your working conditions?**

MWR: Objectively, not very. We haven't won higher wages or anything like that, although we did have some initial success with the bonuses. It's been obvious for some time that to have any real impact we need to reach out to McDonald's workers in other areas and it was with this in mind that we produced *McSues*. However, we have to be realistic: McDonald's opens a new restaurant every three minutes, so even if another McDonald's employee got organised every 10 minutes, the ratio of unorganised, to organised employees, would be increasing.

The main way our experience of work has changed has been through changes we've enacted ourselves. We challenged the company's obsession with hierarchies by downing tools to vote on every petty decision; we've skived more; stolen more; supported each other better and we've found a voice with which to hit back against their idiotic propaganda. Finally, several of the group who produced *McSues* have subsequently got themselves new jobs, and found their working conditions have improved quite a bit!

***Organise!:* How to you see your role in the wider context of the struggle against capitalism?**

MWR: A response that frequently follows a denunciation of McDonald's is an anecdote about an even worse or equally bad job. This is not surprising because, contrary to what you'd think from the attention it receives, there is nothing special about McDonald's — it's just especially good at doing what all businesses attempt, that is maximising the profit they can make out of their employees' labour. MWR is not a cohesive group with a membership or constitution or anything like that, and not everyone involved or in contact would necessarily identify themselves with these aims, but we have never wanted to hide the fact that many of us would like to see the complete overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a system where workers have direct control over production. Already our struggle is clearly linked to others, and not just other workplace struggles. For example, McDonald's can sack workers at will and the (D)SS will be happy to force others into McDonald's service. So we are aware that we are in the same struggle as claimants' groups and many others.

***Organise!:* What are the MWR's opinion on trade unions? Are you seeking TU representation rights?**

MWR: While we would wish to offer solidarity to McDonalds' employees seeking trade union representation (presently in Canada and Russia, for example) and recognise this as positive, it is not an objective for ourselves. We've been greatly inspired by postal workers in Scotland who in recent times have had much success with the sort of industrial action we'd like to see at McDonald's. However, most of this seems to have been done in spite of their union. And this appears to be typical. Additionally, where the staff turnover is as rapid as it is at McDonald's, the traditional trade union model is not really applicable. This, combined with the impotence of contemporary trade unions, has the positive effect of creating space for more effective and more radical alternatives. MWR is an exploration of this space.

***Organise!:* What has the reaction of the company been to your activities?**

MWR: Increasingly, we are concentrating on more anonymous activities away from the shop floor, for example, distributing propaganda, communicating with other McDonald's employees etc. We have been acting anonymously since obviously, McDonald's will sack us as soon as they find us.

They seek us here, they seek us there,
They see us every fucking where,
But they'll not find us whoever they ask,
'Cos decent folk they just don't grass.

***Organise!:* Have you managed to link up with any other like-minded groups in the UK or overseas?**

MWR: At the time of writing we are attempting to develop contacts with McDonald's workers in struggle around the world. Some of these struggles are quite advanced; in France, where the CNT have been organising, a store was recently occupied. There have been strikes in Florence, Italy and union drives in Russia and Canada. We are hoping to propose the formation of an international network of McDonald's workers. Global business, global resistance.

***Organise!:* What has the reaction of other McDonald's employees been to the appearance of *McSues* and are future issues planned?**

MWR: At present only a small amount of the print run has been distributed, but we've already had enthusiastic responses. Even workers who don't agree with our aims usually find *McSues* a good laugh and subsequently struggle to take the company seriously. That in itself is positive. Further issues are very definitely planned, but as several of the group who produced the first issue have escaped the job, we are very keen to get contributions in from other McDonald's workers.

***Organise!:* What is your view of the current wave of 'anti-capitalist' protests? Would you encourage demonstrators to hurl bricks through the window of your store while you were working?**

MWR: Definitely not. We'd encourage them to do it on our day off so we could join in. When there was all the press coverage of the McDonald's that got smashed up on Mayday 2000, so many workers were saying things like: "Wow, I'd love to do that. That would feel so fucking good." *McNews*, McDonald's official staff newsletter, actually printed an article about the Whitehall store re-opening after it got smashed up (issue 25, p.5), where they admitted that: "Before trouble flared, staff shut the restaurant on police advice." So all the shite about low paid workers and families fleeing for their lives was just media lies.
Not all those who identify as anti-capitalist revolutionaries agree with what we're trying to do. Some have declined to work with us, because "people shouldn't work for McDonald's". If people can't tell the difference between the company and its workers then that's a bit scary. But generally we support the anti-capitalist protests.

***Organise!:* How did the company react to the introduction of the minimum wage? There were stories of those over 21 being sacked in favour of those in the bottom end wage bracket.**

MWR: We haven't heard that, which doesn't mean it didn't happen. In general, however, the minimum wage didn't have a great effect on McDonald's. No politician would want to damage the interests of big business, so the minimum wage was set around the level that companies like McDonald's were paying already. To us this provides further evidence of the need for self-activity.

***Organise!:* What are the future plans for MWR?**

MWR: In the short term we hope to consolidate and develop contacts at stores in Britain to form a network of McDonald's workers. This would help us to share ideas and propaganda and possibly we could start thinking about what sort of actions could be co-ordinated nationwide. We'll also be working to develop our international links and to try and learn from the experiences of workers in France, Italy and Canada. Hopefully we can work together to develop effective strategies for global resistance.

And in the long term? Well, we worry that something designed so brilliantly upon the principle of maximising our exploitation could never fit into an emancipated society. However, we have observed that when you empty a McDonald's restaurant, you are left with a not bad five-aside football pitch. So post-revolution MWR is committed to providing quality all-weather sports facilities!
Write to MWR at: MWR, PO Box 3828, Glasgow G41 1YU. *Or email them at:* mwrposse@yahoo.co.uk. *McSues is on the web at:* http://www.mcspotlight.org/campaigns/ current/mwr.html.

If you are a McDonald's employee, or know someone who is, why not get in touch? Take a bundle of *McSues* to distribute to your fellow workers. Contribute to the next issue. Help spread the word. And other workers in low paid, shitty, service sector jobs, why not organise in your workplace? Capitalism? Together we can crack it!

Aff yer head

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The most marked experience of serious mental illness, or of those labelled schizophrenic by an essentially oppressive psychiatric profession, is the assumption of a new identity. This entirely takes the place of the sufferer's old identity and, in essence, the 'lunatic' becomes an entirely different person. Now, this is not to deny that there are not large difficulties faced by anyone who has suffered a total mental breakdown. The most marked aspect of this is paranoia/confusion, where language itself becomes oppressive and the person begins to hallucinate. But I would argue that the reasons for this experience are entirely rational, and based on the problems of living in an entirely antagonistic society.

Identity

I would like to begin my analysis with a general outline of identity. For me, identity is entirely social. A person learns to co-exist and interact with other people, and develops as a result of this interaction. They are given an identity by their parents, and this develops through interaction with them, other children and adults in their environment. In modern bourgeois democracy, for the early part of their lives, most people are allowed a certain leeway, in that their identity is a result of their association with other people, and not imposed by the antagonistic state/capital machine. This may, however, only apply to the children of middle class families. I would argue this leeway of identity would survive in an antagonistic society, where who you are is not important, you will be valued as a member of the human race regardless.

I would argue that for most of the sane majority, their identities have not been challenged. They are more than just a name. In mental illness, however, it becomes impossible to exist with your previous identity and an escape route is sought, albeit unconsciously. The reason for this desperation is that their social identity is removed, i.e., their social situation has become antagonistic, or they find no more avenues for development, they have been cast out of a previously supportive social situation, or they have been punished as a result of their official identity. As a result of this, an intense feeling of worthlessness sets in and you find nothing left to fall back on. Your social identity, built on the people around you, has been negated. This may take the form of physical or sexual abuse, betrayal of trust or, under capitalism, the adaptation of your social situation to antagonistic society by itself becoming antagonistic. This is witnessed in basic atomisation, where people become mendacious, self-serving, manipulative and generally cold. A prime reason, therefore, for the delusions of mental health sufferers, is their total alienation. Alienation from language, from other people, and therefore from their social identity. The action of capitalism expropriates a man's soul by turning the basis of that soul, his society, against him.

Suffering is universal in present society.

I would now like to turn to the process of mental illness itself, or the ways in which a new identity is found. Most mental patients assume an identity taken from history, be it Jesus Christ, Genghis Khan or in my case a descendant of the leaders of the last Jacobite Rebellion. The reasons for this are manifold. Firstly, there is a lack of conscious historical purpose or identity for most people under capitalism. Inability to play a part in improving society as a fully functioning member of the human race. Most people are consigned to the herd of wage slavery, and as a result, are subject to expropriation of their very souls.

Secondly, assuming the identity of a great person from history allows you the symbolic power that goes with it. People are more likely to value Finn McCool than nonentity no. five from the South Side of Glasgow. The term historical can also be used to cover heroes from mythology, who represent powerful entities and are part of the cultural history of mankind. Thirdly, the person feels an unconscious affinity with this new character, which they may have developed earlier in life. The new personality allows the development of dreams from childhood, when development was on a more unconscious level. This basically ties in with the Freudian return of the repressed. Fourthly, there is an element of redemption, the sufferer believes that they can become this person and therefore return something to the glory of their name because, the sufferer, themselves, is such a good person. While of course, becoming a better person themselves, being absolved of all their sins. Fifthly, they may feel that elements of their experience mirror these historical characters. And lastly, the sufferer needs a powerful identity to rationalise all the pain being felt.

Manic depressives and schizophrenics share a feeling of great unhappiness or actual physical pain caused by their relations with other people and rationalise that the reason for their persecution is their powerful, previously hidden identity. They feel they have power because of the abnormal amount of pain they are suffering. A first step to reaching the mentally unwell would be to help them understand that suffering is universal in present society.

sack workers at will and the (D)SS will be happy to force others into McDonald's service. So we are aware that we are in the same struggle as claimants' groups and many others.

***Organise!:* What are the MWR's opinion on trade unions? Are you seeking TU representation rights?**
MWR: While we would wish to offer solidarity to McDonalds' employees seeking trade union representation (presently in Canada and Russia, for example) and recognise this as positive, it is not an objective for ourselves. We've been greatly inspired by postal workers in Scotland who in recent times have had much success with the sort of industrial action we'd like to see at McDonald's. However, most of this seems to have been done in spite of their union. And this appears to be typical. Additionally, where the staff turnover is as rapid as it is at McDonald's, the traditional trade union model is not really applicable. This, combined with the impotence of contemporary trade unions, has the positive effect of creating space for more effective and more radical alternatives. MWR is an exploration of this space.

***Organise!:* What has the reaction of the company been to your activities?**
MWR: Increasingly, we are concentrating on more anonymous activities away from the shop floor, for example, distributing propaganda, communicating with other McDonald's employees etc. We have been acting anonymously since obviously, McDonald's will sack us as soon as they find us.

They seek us here, they seek us there,
They see us every fucking where,
But they'll not find us whoever they ask,
'Cos decent folk they just don't grass.

***Organise!:* Have you managed to link up with any other like-minded groups in the UK or overseas?**
MWR: At the time of writing we are attempting to develop contacts with McDonald's workers in struggle around the world. Some of these struggles are quite advanced; in France, where the CNT have been organising, a store was recently occupied. There have been strikes in Florence, Italy and union drives in Russia and Canada. We are hoping to propose the formation of an international network of McDonald's workers. Global business, global resistance.

***Organise!:* What has the reaction of other McDonald's employees been to the appearance of *McSues* and are future issues planned?**
MWR: At present only a small amount of the print run has been distributed, but we've already had enthusiastic responses. Even workers who don't agree with our aims usually find *McSues* a good laugh and subsequently struggle to take the company seriously. That in itself is positive. Further issues are very definitely planned, but as several of the group who produced the first issue have escaped the job, we are very keen to get contributions in from other McDonald's workers.

***Organise!:* What is your view of the current wave of 'anti-capitalist' protests? Would you encourage demonstrators to hurl bricks through the window of your store while you were working?**
MWR: Definitely not. We'd encourage them to do it on our day off so we could join in. When there was all the press coverage of the McDonald's that got smashed up on Mayday 2000, so many workers were saying things like: "Wow, I'd love to do that. That would feel so fucking good." *McNews*, McDonald's official staff newsletter, actually printed an article about the Whitehall store re-opening after it got smashed up (issue 25, p.5), where they admitted that: "Before trouble flared, staff shut the restaurant on police advice." So all the shite about low paid workers and families fleeing for their lives was just media lies.
Not all those who identify as anti-capitalist revolutionaries agree with what we're trying to do. Some have declined to work with us, because "people shouldn't work for McDonald's". If people can't tell the difference between the company and its workers then that's a bit scary. But generally we support the anti-capitalist protests.

***Organise!:* How did the company react to the introduction of the minimum wage? There were stories of those over 21 being sacked in favour of those in the bottom end wage bracket.**
MWR: We haven't heard that, which doesn't mean it didn't happen. In general, however, the minimum wage didn't have a great effect on McDonald's. No politician would want to damage the interests of big business, so the minimum wage was set around the level that companies like McDonald's were paying already. To us this provides further evidence of the need for self-activity.

***Organise!:* What are the future plans for MWR?**
MWR: In the short term we hope to consolidate and develop contacts at stores in Britain to form a network of McDonald's workers. This would help us to share ideas and propaganda and possibly we could start thinking about what sort of actions could be co-ordinated nationwide. We'll also be working to develop our international links and to try and learn from the experiences of workers in France, Italy and Canada. Hopefully we can work together to develop effective strategies for global resistance.

And in the long term? Well, we worry that something designed so brilliantly upon the principle of maximising our exploitation could never fit into an emancipated society. However, we have observed that when you empty a McDonald's restaurant, you are left with a not bad five-aside football pitch. So post-revolution MWR is committed to providing quality all-weather sports facilities!
Write to MWR at: MWR, PO Box 3828, Glasgow G41 1YU. *Or email them at:* mwrposse@yahoo.co.uk. *McSues is on the web at:* http://www.mcspotlight.org/campaigns/ current/mwr.html.

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Official identity

I would now like to turn to the response of the system and society to mental illness and the potential for liberation that mental illness reveals.

Basically, the system works by re-imposing the person's former or official identity. This is a continuous process starting in the family and the world of work and only intensified in mental hospitals. A person's official identity is a stick to beat them with. As a child, consumer (of anything, as long as you pay for it) or labourer you are placed on an unequal footing. Anyone who thinks they control your identity can use this fact to completely disregard your humanity, if you know personally the people who oppress you, it becomes worse because the oppression takes on a physical and manifest form.

A person only develops when he/she can approach other people without fear. Living with or working for a person who thinks they control your identity automatically puts them in a position to create fear in you. This is the psychological consequence of capitalism, where people turn other people into property. A main tactic can be, in fact, labelling or calling someone mad in the first place, when they are not. This implies that the person is not human, is already an outcast, has created their own suffering, or, has brought about their own punishment by acting in the way they do — an argument analogous to the one where Jews deserve to be exterminated because they are weak. Of course, this is the main problem with mental hospitals where people are treated as self-made outcasts from an otherwise benevolent society. The existence of the state ties in with this as everyone becomes a piece of property or a subject and thus expendable. Those who value themselves and their independence are deemed insane.

Hospitalisation

I would now like to turn to more concrete matters by focussing on the effect of psychiatric hospitals on patients. Firstly, the patient is ignored. Nurses, doctors, do not talk to patients. This is because the suffering person is deemed irrational and therefore basically impossible to talk to, no longer a social being. That this ignorance may be the reason for the patient's problems in the first place, and he/she may be dying to talk to people about his/her new identity and how the world can finally be a better place, is concealed or ignored, perhaps consciously, to further weaken the person's psyche.

People are denied basic human rights on the most innocuous of pretences. Wanting to leave the hospital, or basically confronting the psychiatric profession with the truth, that you are being oppressed unjustly, you are not irrational, and being somebody new doesn't mean that you are, can lead to your being sectioned. This means that for 28 days, soon to be six months, you cannot go outside the ward, have to take medication and have a nurse follow you everywhere. Everyday situations in mental hospitals go beyond the Kafkaesque. Medication itself is designed to suppress your mental activity, your delusions, which are basically an essential part of yourself at that time, and as such to cut you off from your physical existence, suppressing your very will to live. Witnessed by the high number of suicides among mental patients after leaving mental hospital and after returning to the person you most hate, yourself, and the same environment as caused your emotional destruction, most likely friends and family. The system does not even treat you as mentally ill. If you were, you could be talked to and reasoned with, but this is not the way of modern psychiatry. Besides, some people get banged up just for being activists, as in the case of Greg Minns in Burnley.

Liberation

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the liberation found in mental illness. Firstly, a mental patient is entirely sociable. They depend on other people for warmth, kindness and solidarity. The usual picture of mental hospitals is completely false, they are usually very quiet and subdued places. The change in the sufferer's identity is also accompanied with a change in the identities of those round about them. The happiness found in escaping from your life needs to be shared, in a way. Also they are left no doubt about their own goodness, although you are totally alienated the mere fact of your having a body with which to associate with other people means you can intuitively follow your own will and power to do good rather than evil, evil no longer has any hold over or attraction for the totally insane. Basically, your experience becomes proof of the power of the individual. But as a social being your wants are basically the same as those around you, love, comfort, peace and happiness. But, to say that these can be achieved in anything other than a stateless communist society would be a blatant lie.

In conclusion, the experience of mental health sufferers is one of unending pain, but that all that is needed to end their suffering is compassion and understanding. With the ending of capitalism and the state, not only would suffering not arise, but also people would be free to be forbearing with the mentally dispossessed.

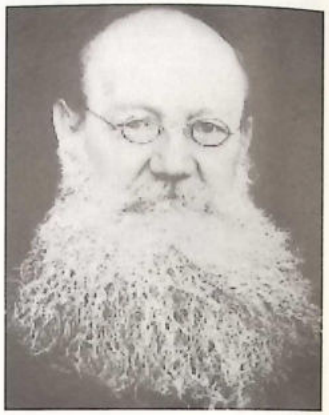
Greg Minns

Greg is a young activist who has fallen victim to the mental health laws of the UK. We have publicised details of his case in earlier issues of *Organise!* He has recently put together a dossier about his case. It makes frightening reading and is an indictment of the use of drug therapy in dealing with those who fall foul of these laws. If you want a copy, then write to him at Millerbank, 27 Carlton Road, Burnley, Lancs BB11 4JE. Be sure to enclose a couple of quid to pay for photocopying and postage.

Tribal life and anarchism

The Politics of Peter Kropotkin

Organise! *editors' note: This article is an edited version of a chapter from a book by Brian Morris. A member of the AF, with Brian's permission, did the editing. If you want to find out more about the book, then contact the AF's London Group.*



Kropotkin is one of the first thinkers to attack the ideas of philosophers whose work helped to justify capitalism and the state. He was, in particular, strongly opposed to the views of such philosophers as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, all "contract theorists" who tended to view humans in as essentially asocial, atomistic beings. Hobbes especially considered the human person as a self-directing machine, a possessive individual who was aggressive, competitive, acquisitive, anti-social and power seeking, ever engaged in a restless desire for power. Life in the "state of nature", that is, tribal society, was thus uncivilised — lacking culture, art, sociality and morality. It exhibited a "war of every one against every one". As Hobbes graphically expressed it is in the oft-quoted phrase, in the state of nature there is continual fear and conflict, and the "life of man" is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Therefore, the only way society could exist was to have a state.

Although acknowledging the social nature of the individual, Locke and the political economists tended to re-affirm this liberal conception of the individual as a "possessive" individual, the competitive owner of private property, both in terms of real property and in terms of owning "property in the person".

Kropotkin rejected entirely the Hobbesian view of social life along with the possessive individualism of liberal social theory. For Kropotkin, humans were intrinsically social animals: indeed, as we have seen, sociality and mutual aid were held by Kropotkin to be intrinsic to animal life itself and therefore to human life as well. Humans without society had simply never existed; neither had absolute freedom — in the sense of licence to do anything. Therefore, according to Kropotkin, these philosophies are myths used to justify the nation state.

As the views of Hobbes seemed so widely accepted, Kropotkin in his writings felt it important to defend the integrity of tribal society. He thus attempted to indicate that clan-based societies do not live in a perpetual state of fear, natural lust and hostility but are characterised by social institutions based on mutual aid and reciprocity and by explicit moral principles.

Mutual Aid

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin devoted separate chapters to outlining the social life of what he described — following the terminology of Lewis Morgan and other early anthropologists — as "savages" (hunter-gatherers) and "barbarians" (agricultural peoples living in settled villages). Believing firmly in the "idea of unity in nature" and that there was no "gulf" or "abyss" between humans and animals, Kropotkin stressed that humans were no exception to the general principles of sociability and mutual aid that he felt played a crucial role on the evolution of animal life. All humans, throughout history and without exception, thus live in societies, and Kropotkin felt that the "social instinct" was deeply rooted in human psychology. He even suggested that "social life — that is, we, not I — is the normal form of life. Such sociability and mutual aid was expressed in many different ways — for mutual defence, in collective hunting and the sharing of food, in the rearing of children or simply for enjoying life in common.

Kropotkin felt that there were common patterns of social organisation evident among early human societies — which were independent of both climate and race — and that the same process of evolution had been going on among humankind with "a wonderful similarity". It was represented by two distinct phases: an earlier phase of hunter-gathering when "clan organisation" and "tribal solidarity" were the primary forms of organisation; and a later phase which emerged with the development of agricultural and pastoralism. In this later stage or era, the patriarchal "family" emerged as a distant social unit, and the "village community" became the chief means of "barbarian" people in their struggle against a hostile environment.

Drawing on his own experiences among the Tungus and other native peoples of Siberia, and on the few anthropological studies that were then available at the end of the nineteenth century, Kropotkin sought to emphasise that the Hobbesian view of "primitive man", bore very little relation to the realities of tribal life. For studies of the "Bushmen" and Hottentot (the Khoisan people) of Southern Africa, the Dayaks of Borneo, the aboriginal people of Australia, the natives of Papua New Guinea, and the Aleuts of North Alaska, all indicated the importance of mutual aid and social solidarity among tribal communities. Kropotkin indicated, with ethnographic data drawn from numerous sources, the complexity in the organisation of their marriage rules, the fact that the band or clan and not the family, was of crucial importance in their social life, and that "unbridled individualism" was a characteristic of modern societies rather than tribal life. The emphasis among these tribal communities, as recorded by sympathetic observers, was on the sharing of food and goods, on the importance of generosity, on equality among clan members, and on sociability. Kropotkin notes the high standard of morality among such people as the Aleuts and Eskimo (Inuit), and describes their social life as one based on "communism" and tribal solidarity.

Kropotkin writes particularly perceptively of the unwritten encyclopaedic knowledge of the natural world possessed by tribal peoples and of the close relationship that pertained between humans and animals among such peoples, as well as among the early ancestors of Europeans. Among tribal peoples then, Kropotkin suggested, a close intimacy pertained between humans and animals. They had a deep knowledge of the habits and ecology of animals, which was expressed in proverbs and sayings, they considered animals, as social beings, to be considerably wiser than themselves, for they had observed that all animals were in continual communication.

When he journeyed in Siberia, Kropotkin wrote, "I often noticed the care with which my Tungus or Mongol guide would take not to kill any animal uselessly. The fact is that every life is respected by a savage, or rather was, before he came into contact with Europeans". Kropotkin notes that tribal people, far from expressing contempt for human life, hated murder and bloodshed, and to spill blood, whether of a human or an animal, was a "grave matter".

Nostalgia?

Kropotkin has often been accused of looking with "undue nostalgia" towards the past, and as portraying tribal life as more idyllic than it actually was. But it has to be remembered that Kropotkin was attempting to counter the Hobbesian portrayal of tribal life by his contemporaries, and he did not in fact ignore the violence and murder that was evident in tribal society, nor the power that was often possessed by the shamans. He noted, for example, that solidarity often did not extend beyond the clan or tribe, and that "quarrels arose between people of different clans and tribes which could end in violence or even murder". Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid* was seeking a better understanding of the social life of tribal people, not advocating a return to a hunter-gathering existence. He was not an anarcho-primitivist.

Contrary to the Hobbesian image, Kropotkin recognised that "savages" (hunter-gatherers) had complex social organisations and cultural forms, and that their life was governed and sustained, not by a "war of all against all" but by an intricate web of customary norms and inter-personal relationships. Mutual aid and reciprocity were the guiding principles of such tribal or clan-based societies; the same could be said for the agricultural peoples whom the Romans called "barbarians". For Kropotkin this was a phase or era of human social evolution that came before serfdom (feudalism) and to the rise of the state, as exemplified by the Roman Empire. "Barbarian" society thus constituted a phase between clan-based tribal communities and the emergence of the state as an institutional form. It was represented in Europe in such peoples as the Celts, Teutons and Slavs, who when they first came into contact with the Roman Empire, were undergoing, Kropotkin felt, a transitional phase of organisation. For with the development and increasing concentration of wealth and power in tribal society, and a more settled existence, the patriarchal family steadily emerged as a separate unit, independent of the clans, and the village community became the central focus of social life. Although Kropotkin recognised that the village community was a form of social organisation found throughout the world, he discussed in some detail three specific societies, the Buryats of Eastern Siberia, the Kabyles of Algeria and the Mountain people of the Caucasia, relying specifically on the pioneer writings of Henry Maine and Maxim Kovalevsky.

Kropotkin emphasised four aspects of their social life; that each of these people had their own complex and unique form of morality; that there was a strong emphasis among these people on reciprocity and sharing; that although they lacked state instructions, these people, though communal rituals and confederal relationships, had a sense of tribal solidarity or nationhood; and finally, that there were no institutions of "private property", land being held in common by the clans or village communities. Communism was thus a ruling principle among the "barbarian" people, as it was for clan-based societies. As Kropotkin wrote:

> *"Land was thus under common control, hunting and cultivation were often communal activities, and the resolution of social conflict was achieved through clan institutions or village assemblies."*

With regards to the Kabyle, Kropotkin wrote that they:

> *"Know of no authority whatever besides that of the djemmaa, or folkmoot of the village community. All men of age take part in it, in the open air... and the decisions of the djemmaa are evidently taken at unanimity: that is, the discussions continue until all present agree to accept, or to submit to, some decision. There being no authority*

Continued on page 19

Part three
In the tradition

This is part three of 'In the tradition', a roughly chronological outline of the various political events, movements and ideas which have influenced the development of the Anarchist Federation.
We left off last time having looked at currents which emerged during the 1960s, particularly the British-based Solidarity and the Situationist International (see Organise! #53). Both of these groups were to see in the events in France of May-June 1968, confirmation of their argument that a modern revolution would be one which would develop through the autonomous activity of millions of 'ordinary' people and a revolution against the official 'representatives' of the working class; the unions, labour and communist parties.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the bourgeois media, 'May '68' has been reduced to a 'student revolt' centred entirely on Paris and in particular the occupied Sorbonne University, which involved some barricade building, some fighting with the police and a load of hot air. The modern media enjoys pointing to the subsequent political trajectories of various participants, notably the 'spokesperson' Daniel Cohn-Bendit, then a libertarian communist, now a NATO supporting Green MP, as proof that the events had no long lasting effect, were just an outburst of youthful exuberance by the children of the bourgeoisie.

Social revolution continues to haunt capitalism

The reality of the events of May-June, "the greatest revolutionary movement in France since the Paris Commune" (*International Situationniste*, September 1969) is very different. Although the actions of the students provided a detonator, the actual social explosion was manifested in the largest wildcat strike in history, the occupation of workplaces across the country and the proof, if proof were needed, that the spectre of social revolution continues to haunt capitalism.

Superficially, the insurgence of May 1968 appears to have come out of nowhere. In France and in Europe generally, class struggle was at a low-ebb; there appeared a massive depoliticisation, particularly amongst young people and prospects for any movement for revolutionary change seemed particularly remote.

However, amongst large sectors of the working class there existed a long-standing bitterness born of long-neglected grievances over wage claims and simmering resentments over conditions of work. Amongst young workers particularly there was a sense that the misery of the previous generation wasn't for them. It was amongst this part of the working class, including the '*blousons noirs*', the members of street gangs, that the revolutionary spark ignited and they were usually the first to join the students on the streets, in order to 'have a go' at the police.

In the universities, the high-schools and in many workplaces, there were also various revolutionary groups and individuals who had been agitating for years, some of whom were or had been involved in various libertarian socialist currents outlined in part two of 'In the tradition'. Prior to the May-June events these groups had enjoyed a growth, but one that could not be described as large or rapid. However, revolutionary ideas had a small but growing audience amongst significant sections of students and workers.

The original agitation had its origins in the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris, a new ultra-modern nightmare of glass and steel stuck in the middle of a mainly Algerian immigrant working class area. In April 1967, some male students set up camp outside the female dormitories in protest against sexual segregation, setting a ball of dissent rolling which culminated in a student boycott of lectures in November.

March 22nd

On March 22nd 1968, a group of students occupied the university administrative building in protest against the arrest of members of the National Vietnam Committee (anti-Vietnam war protests were taking place across the globe). This was the birth of the March 22nd Movement (M22), an affinity-type group of the amorphous New Left, but which included anarchists and people influenced by Situationist ideas. The M22 'spokesman' Daniel Cohn-Bendit was associated with the Noir et Rouge group of libertarian communists (see 'In the tradition' part 2) and, thanks to the media, his face became the face of the movement. Also amongst the student agitation were the Enragés, by no means all students themselves, but

The greatest revolutionary movement since the Paris Commune.

rather a group of troublemakers close to the Situationist International. From the student side these groups attempted to push the movement as far as it could go, against the forces of Stalinism and 'modernism' which attempted to keep the struggle a sectional one confined to improving the conditions of the monkeys in the University zoo.

The May events began with the call for a demonstration by the M22 for Monday, May 6th, in order to coincide with a disciplinary hearing involving M22 members at the Sorbonne and the official day for beginning exams. The academic authorities, hoping to crush the militant minority, closed the Sorbonne and called in the riot police, the CRS on Friday 3rd May. Violent clashes occurred in the Latin Quarter (the area around the University) whilst the cops attempted to pick up the troublemakers and generally intimidate the student population. The official student union (UNEF) and the lecturers union called an immediate strike in protest. This continued over the weekend as an emergency court jailed six student 'agitators' and the authorities banned the planned Monday demonstration. The march went ahead and was the biggest seen in Paris since the Algerian war. Between the Monday and the following Friday the momentum increased with ever larger numbers in the streets, talking, planning, organising. On the Friday the first barricades went up and the situation took a semi-insurrectionary turn following a 30,000 strong march where the University students were joined by large numbers of high school students and local workers. The police response was brutal in the extreme, but the situation was changing from a 'student' protest isolated in Paris to something that would engulf millions throughout France, that is a class movement.

On May 13th, realising that a grassroots revolt was gathering momentum, the trade unions, led by the Stalinist CGT, called a one-day protest strike in order to let off a little steam and to maintain some sort of leadership role. The demonstration of at least 200,000 (some estimate a far higher figure) contained workers from every industry and workplace. At the 'official' end of the march the CGT stewards, of which there were at least 10,000, managed to get most of the crowd to disperse, although they needed to physically intimidate many non-party activists in order maintain control. Thousands still managed to converge on the Champ de Mars at the foot of the Eiffel tower to discuss just where the struggle was going.

On the 13th also, the Sorbonne was vacated by the CRS and subsequently occupied by students and others. In an atmosphere which has been described as 'euphoric' the university buildings were transformed into a vast arena of revolutionary discussion and action, 24 hours a day. The original occupiers were soon joined by delegations from other educational institutes, from the high schools (where the Jeunesse Anarchiste Communiste (Anarchist Communist Youth) organisations

played a significant role in forming Action Committees) and from factories and offices. Various committees developed with responsibilities for the occupation, propaganda, liaison committees with the workers and other students. Leninist groups argued with each other over the historical significance of it all and who would be providing the correct leadership. Funnily enough, none of them were required to do so. Those who really wanted to develop the movement as far it would go attempted to deepen the break with bourgeois society and to encourage the working class to take things into its own hands (and out of those of the parties and unions).

Occupation of the workplaces

The occupation of factories and other workplaces began on May 14th when the Sud Aviation plant at Nantes was occupied by its workers. The next day the Renault factories at Cléon and Flins were occupied and over the next couple of days the wildcat strike wave was spread all over France. Few major workplaces were not affected, even in small rural towns. Action Committees were set up in numberless factories

and offices and red (and sometimes black!) flags were hoisted over building sites, railway stations, schools and pitheads. By Monday May 20th the whole of France was paralysed. Students were talking with workers and workers were talking amongst themselves, the main question being "How far are we going to take this?". Back in the Sorbonne, revolutionary elements within the Occupation Committee issued a call for "the immediate occupation of all the factories in France and the formation of workers councils". For a period it looked as if a revolution which would go far beyond merely getting rid of the Gaullist government was a distinct possibility. When the majority of the Occupation Committee prevaricated, the revolutionary elements, situationists and members of the Enragés group formed a Committee for Maintaining the Occupations on May 19th, which continued to call for the creation of workers councils. This call was echoed by various groups involved in the struggle in different parts of France, whilst increasing numbers of workers joined the strike movement. By the end of the week 10 million were on strike.

For the abolition of bosses!

But the dead hand of Stalinism and of social democracy still lay heavily upon the working class. On the 24th the CGT called a mass demonstration of its members in Paris. The March 22nd Movement and the Action Committees called for a demonstration around the slogans "No to parliamentary solutions! No to negotiations which only prop up capitalism! Workers! Peasants! Students! Workers! Teachers! Schoolboys! (sic) Let us organise and co-ordinate our struggle: For the abolition of Bosses! All power to the Workers!" The CGT assembled, in an effort to demobilise, around 200,000 workers, the revolutionary demonstration being around 100,000 strong. During the latter demonstration the Stock Exchange was burnt down and various government ministries were saved not by the numbers of riot cops but the success of the Trotskyists Young 'Revolutionary' 'Communists' and the social democrats of the official student union in turning the demonstrators back into the 'security' of the Latin Quarter. On the same day in Bordeaux, demonstrators attempted to storm the municipal buildings and that night street fighting occurred in Paris, Lyon, Nantes and other cities.

Reactionary mobilisation

The struggle had reached a critical point and the power which appeared for the taking began to look like it was slipping from the grasp of the would-be revolutionaries. The May 27th CGT demonstration of perhaps half a million workers passed off with little or no incident. Three days later President De Gaulle announced an election within 40 days and supporters of the General and of the maintenance of capitalism generally suddenly sensed that the movement had stalled. A reactionary mobilisation took place with hundreds of thousands of France's bourgeoisie and their petit-bourgeois hangers on swamping Paris, calling for order, support for the police and a violent death for the Jew, Cohn-Bendit. The revolutionary initiative had been lost and it only remained for the trade unions to step in and mediate towards an orderly return to normality.

Not all workers (and certainly not all students) went back to 'normality' so compliantly. The strikes in the important sectors such as the railway, post and in the mines continued into the first week of June. The car workers at Renault, Peugeot and Citroen continued to occupy. But as the CGT and the other unions organised a return to work nationally, the most intransigent sections of the working class found themselves increasingly isolated and subject to state repression. On June 7th the Renault works at Flins was subject to a pre-dawn raid and the occupying workers expelled at gunpoint. Sporadic fighting in the countryside around the plant continued for three days. In various parts of France pickets refused to budge and were having to be battered out of the plants and back to normality.

In the Peugeot works in Sochaux, an attack by the CRS was repulsed by volleys of bolts and other metal objects. In response the police opened fire on the workers, killing two. After a 36-hour battle, Sochaux was finally 'normalised'. Most car workers voted to return by the 17th, the striking radio and TV workers were the last to return, holding out until the second week of July. As for the students, the Sorbonne was cleared by the CRS on the 16th, others held out for a few more weeks. Militants insisted "the struggle continues", as indeed it does, but the revolutionary potential in France was petering out. The struggle was to continue, but elsewhere. Solidarity, in the eyewitness account Paris May 1968 concluded that the events pointed to the need for:

"the creation of a new kind of revolutionary movement... strong enough to outwit the bureaucratic manoeuvres, alert enough day by day to expose the duplicity of the 'left' leaderships, deeply enough implanted to explain the to the workers the real meaning of the students' struggle, to propagate the idea of autonomous strike committees (linking up union and non-union members), of workers management and workers councils."

ITALIAN SUMMER

'May 1968' was followed by the Italian 'Hot Summer' of 1969 (which actually began in Autumn 1968), where a wave of strikes and factory occupations, often outside and against the union structures spread over industrial Italy. Mass strike meetings were opened up to 'outsiders' — local people, students and revolutionary militants. Particularly combative car worker strikes broke out in Alfa Romeo and Fiat plants and there were street confrontations with the cops throughout the year. University, but particularly high school, students were involved in struggles which echoed those of the French student mobilisations.

This wave of struggle gave birth to many organisations, both at the level of the factories and in the broader social milieu, the most notable being Lotta Continua (The Continuing Struggle) and Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy). The anti-union nature of the struggles also gave rise to what became the theory and activity of 'workers autonomy' (not synonymous with the organisation of the same name), which the new organisations attempted to relate to. Workers were taking their struggles on to the streets, using imaginative direct actions. Occupations of city centres and sieges of municipal buildings continued throughout the 1970s.

Restructuring

Struggles in Italy also took place around the prisons, which from the early 1970s were increasingly home to revolutionary militants, often culminating in massive demonstrations and prison riots. The period of heightened class struggles heralded in 1968 underwent a transformation as a new employers' offensive, based upon the desire to avoid the emerging economic crisis, involved a technological restructuring of industry and the end of the 'workers' fortresses' of the massive plants. On a political level, the Communist Party was increasingly integrated into the state structures in return for its complicity in this restructuring. This integration of the Communist Party was in part responsible for the emergence of urban armed struggle in the mid-70s.

Armed struggle

Indeed, in Italy, the 1970s were defined by two aspects. Firstly, a level of militancy amongst a large number of workers both employed and unemployed which manifested itself in autonomous struggle both in the factories and on a territorial basis and which arguably reached its high point in the 'movement of '77'. Secondly, the 'armed struggle for communism' carried out by several Leninist groups which, when not actually state sponsored contributed nothing to the actual class struggles which they claimed to somehow 'lead'. The activities of the latter, which left the working class as spectators to their own 'liberation', tend to overshadow the actual content of the class struggles that took place and any revolutionary potential.

AND IN 'SOCIALIST' POLAND...

The strikes and occupations were echoed in the proletarian insurgency in Poland in 1970-71, when workers responded to 'socialist' austerity measures with their very own May '68 (only in December and January!) burning down the ruling Stalinist party headquarters to the tune of the Internationale. In areas of the country the working class was effectively master of the situation. As in France, and indeed Italy, the working class balked at 'going the whole hog' but exhibited a need and desire to, if only temporarily, go beyond all forms of representation and to develop an autonomous activity. And all this without the leadership of the self-proclaimed vanguards...

The May-June events in France were the clearest confirmation that only a mass social revolution which stretched to every sector of exploited humanity could end the chaos of capitalism.

In the concluding part of 'In the tradition' we look at the developments post-'68 up to the present day.

Tribal life and anarchism

Continued from page 15

in a village community to impose a decision, this system has been practised by mankind wherever there have been village communities".

Although Kropotkin was an inveterate optimist when it came to the question of a social revolution, he was neither naive nor ill-informed when it came to understanding the realities of social life. He thus did not romanticise tribal society, and the suggestion that Kropotkin was an advocate of "post-industrial tribalism" represents a total misunderstanding of Kropotkin's conception of a future anarchist communist society.

In stressing that humans did not live in a "state of perpetual warfare" and that mutual aid and reciprocity were the norm in tribal society — thus countering the "caricature" of tribal life put out by the followers of Hobbes — Kropotkin never sought to hide the limitations of the early forms of social life. He notes that among tribal people infanticide and the abandonment of old people was often practised, that raiding and fiends are common, with a blind commitment to the "rules of blood revenge", that one finds secret societies and initiations that give power to shamans and priests; that witchcraft beliefs are common, and that different ethical principles are often applied to those outside a particular tribal community — and that during conflict "revolting cruelties" may thus be inflicted upon enemies. So Kropotkin was not an advocate of anarcho-primitivism, nor did he suggest that the "tradition of authority" should be replaced by the "authority of tradition". He recognised only too well the hierarchical aspects of tribal life, and the sometimes oppressive nature of public opinion. As he wrote:

"There is no doubt that primitive society had temporary leaders. The sorcerer, the rainmaker — the learned man of that age — sought to profit from what they knew about nature in order to dominate their fellow beings. Similarly, he who could more easily memorise the proverbs and songs in which all traditions was embodied became influential".

Another key point of Kropotkin's critique of bourgeois social theory was his view that sociality and culture are not the enemy of individual autonomy and expression, but must be seen as "the structure without which no individuals can even begin to exercise their potentialities". Individuals in tribal society were not unreflective or lacking any individuality, their lives completely determined by social norms and public opinion. Kropotkin always stressed the need to develop a society that not only respected but also

enhanced individual freedom and initiative. Individual autonomy is of paramount importance to Kropotkin and he neither romanticised tribal life, nor considered public opinion on tradition as some hallowed social form, but rather sought to develop a new form of society "in which the welfare of all would become the groundwork for the fullest development of the personality". Kropotkin was thus concerned to cherish and uphold the "development of individuality" and the creative power of the individual.

Throughout his writings, Kropotkin made a clear distinction between two forms of individualism, the kind of bourgeois individualism associated with Hobbes and Nietzsche, and the "true individualism" of the anarchist communist tradition. The egoism — the "narrow and selfish" individualism — espoused by liberal theorists and by the anarchist followers of Nietzsche, Kropotkin considered "spurious" for it was essentially asocial and implied the oppression of ones neighbours, at the elitist affirmation of a "superior type" of humanity. The egomaniac, or the narcissistic individual who was content to treat other people as objects, or as a means of their own empowerment, was not Kropotkin's idea of an anarchist.

Individualism

In a recent study on the politics of individualism L Susan Brown essentially follows Kropotkin in making a distinction between two forms of individualism, the instrumental individualism of liberal political theory, and the existentialist individualism, which she argues, is shared by both anarchist political philosophy and liberalism. Instrumental individualism implies an "abstract" (asocial) individual, as a possessive individual, an individual who uses others to further their own ends and self-interest. Instrumental individualism is thus based on the belief in freedom as a means to achieve individual interests, and conceives the human person as a possessive, competitive individual, the owner of property, not only in terms of "self-ownership" — having property in oneself — but also as holding real, private property.

Existential individualism, on the other hand — Kropotkin's "true" individualism — is "founded on the idea that freedom is an inherently valuable end in itself; self determination and individual autonomy are desirable for themselves, and need no other justification". Thus freedom can have two very different meanings — that of instrumental freedom manifested through the market, and that of existential freedom, expressed in the individual's capacity to be autonomous and self-determining.

In an important critique of liberal feminism — as expressed in the writings of John Stuart Mill, Betty Friedan and Janet Radcliffe Richards — Brown clearly demonstrated that liberal political theory contains an inherent contradiction, in embracing both forms of individualism. For all three scholars, in their liberal commitment to an inherently unequal class system (capitalism) and in advocating state power, completely undermine the existential individualism that they also profess to espouse. Individualist anarchism, Brown suggests, is essentially a radical version of liberalism and not an alternative to it, and that only social anarchism has political coherence in combining existential individualism with free communism.

In contrast, liberalism and individualist anarchism (or anarcho-capitalism) to the degree that they advocate private property and the free market economy always compromise individual freedom and undermine existential individualism.

Brown also emphasises the fact that social anarchism is not only opposed to governmental power (the state) but seeks to dissolve all forms of authority and power. She quotes Rudolf Rocker:

> *"Common to all anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions which stand in the way of the development of free humanity."*

She thus concludes that anarchists oppose any form of social organisation that take away or inhibits the self-determination of the individual.

However, in contrast to Kropotkin, her emphasis in the study is on individual autonomy rather than on social freedom. Kropotkin was not only critical of the state, and all its manifestations and techniques of power (prisons, schools) but also of private property, the wage system, capitalism and all forms of religious authority - not just the state.

Kropotkin never fantasised about a pre-social state of nature, for he recognised that humans were intrinsically social beings — as well as being autonomous individuals. He thus repudiated entirely the philosophy

Kropotkin recognised that humans were essentially social beings.

of the individual as asocial, possessive, narcissistic and competitive. He considered this narrow and selfish individualism to be both "misanthropic" and oppressive. But in stressing that humans were inherently social beings, this did not imply that human nature was "fixed" or "static", or that they had ontological "freedom". Kropotkin stressed social freedom and a communal individuality, and advocated anarchist communism in that he felt that this formed the best basis for individual development and freedom, and allowed for the full expression of a person's faculties, capacities and individuality.

It has been fashionable, usually by writers of Ph.D. theses, to criticise Kropotkin for having a romantic view of human nature and therefore making ethics unnecessary. This presents a complete travesty of anarchist thought. It has often been said that Kropotkin, and anarchists move generally, are too innocent, too naive, and have too rosy a picture of human nature. It is said that, like Rousseau, they have a romantic view of human nature, which they see as essentially good, co-operative and peace loving. But of course, real humans are not like this: they are cruel and aggressive and selfish, and so anarchy is just a pipe dream. It is an unrealistic vision of a past golden age that never existed. This being so, some form of coercive authority is always necessary. The truth is that Kropotkin — and other anarchists — do not follow Rousseau. Kropotkin, as we have seen, repudiated Rousseau's idealisation of the "noble savage", while Bakunin was even more scathing in his criticisms of the eighteenth century philosopher.

Kropotkin and most anarchists, think of humans as having both positive and negative tendencies. If they did think humans all goodness and light, would they mind being ruled? It is because they have a realistic rather than a romantic view of human nature, that they oppose all forms of authority that are coercive, or in any way inhibit the self-determination of the individual. In essence, anarchists oppose all power, which the French describe as "puissance" — "power over" (rather than "pouvoir", the power to do something), and believe, like Lord Acton, that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Social anarchism

In his study of nineteenth century social anarchism, David Morland argues that Kropotkin (along with Proudhon and Bakunin) was not a starry-eyed visionary out of touch with the world, but had a realistic attitude towards humans and human nature. These anarchists recognised that both an inherent sociability and an inherent egoism were rooted in human psychology. But because they acknowledged human "egoism" the classical anarchists like Kropotkin, Morland contends, could not logically and empirically advocate an anarchist society, a society without a state. Equating politics and power with coercive government and seemingly unaware that for most of human history people have in fact lived in societies without government, Morland argues that human "egoism" renders a stateless society "impossible". With "egoism" there inevitably arise conflicts and disputes, and these, for Morland, necessarily entail state institutions, although for most of human history such conflicts and disputes have been resolved — or not resolved — through social institutions that have no relationship to the state. To bolster his case Morland highlights the inconsistencies and problematic nature of Proudhon's and Bakunin's anarchism — long recognised and critiqued by anarchists — and is continually engaged in the conflation of moral coercion and public opinion with state force. Anarchists, of course, have always recognised that public opinion and social norms (not state laws) can be problematic and oppressive.

Morland's essential argument is contained in the following:

> *"Both humanity's egocentrism and the economic and political disputes that will ensue from this egocentrism have to be restrained... Hence the need for the state. The state's raison d'être is grounded in human nature and politics."*

Hobbes basically argued this three hundred years ago. But the state — centralised, coercive authority — is there not just to keep law and order or to settle disputes — stemming from our egoism — but to promote and uphold, and when necessary, defend, systems of social inequality and exploitation i.e. class interests. This has always been the raison d'être ever since the first state arose only a few thousand years ago. As the old liberal Adam Smith put it, government is for the security of property, and is, in reality, instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, for those who have property against those who have none. Not severing politics from economics the classical liberals had a much more historical sense of what the state is all about than it seems contemporary liberals like Morland who views the state simply as a neutral referee and as a guardian of public interest. Kropotkin, of course, was always to emphasise the intrinsic relationship between political (state) and economic (capitalism) power.

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Human nature

Kropotkin in critiquing the "individualism" of Western metaphysics and political theory, at least attempted to outline an alternative conception of human nature. Kropotkin recognised that humans have certain inherent capacities and powers that are rooted in our biological inheritance: and that humans, like many other animals, are intrinsically, social beings, constituted through social relationships. Thus, for Kropotkin, we are neither completely socially determined — a "docile body", or simply an "effect" of discourses, language or power; nor are human free of social constraints. But Kropotkin also stressed the importance of social agency and "personalismus", a form of existential individualism that emphasised creative self-determination and autonomy — a view of the self that does not entail submission or confession.

The language of freedom

The voice of internationalism

Anarchists have been at the forefront of the international workers' Esperanto movement practically from day one.

The Anarchist Federation, rightly, has always taken its international work seriously. Our International Secretariat has contact with anarchists and other revolutionaries across the globe. The work they do may simply be a matter of letter writing, exchanging info with comrades about matters in their respective countries. At other times, it has meant concerted solidarity actions on an international level. Furthermore, the AF also participates as a member section of the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF).

Point 4 of our *Aims and Principles* states, "The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated". But such boundaries might not only political or economic constructs, they may also be social or psychological barriers. One major barrier between workers uniting on the international level, which is often overlooked or even ignored, is language.

Language is always a problem, as anyone will tell you if they've attempted to communicate with overseas comrades, particularly if they have limited knowledge of a foreign language and if the overseas comrade knows very little English.

Yet for us as revolutionaries, this need not be an insurmountable problem. With a little bit of application and a degree of international co-operation, the language problem is something we can overcome without too much difficulty.

Of course, we could all spend loads of time attempting to learn lots of languages (badly)... Alternatively, we could spend just a little time learning one very simple and neutral international language (Esperanto) as a means of communicating with comrades in other countries.

Now usually, at the mention of Esperanto, the cynical comments begin...

"But hardly anyone speaks it."

Fact: Several million people worldwide speak Esperanto. Actually, even in Britain where Esperanto is relatively weak, Esperantists greatly outnumber anarchists.

"But English is already a kind of international language, isn't it?"

True. But English is the international language of business, the multinationals, power, imperialism, etc. In many parts of the world English has been forced on people, in some cases literally at the point of a gun. Esperanto on the other hand, is not the property of any class, nation, corporation or government. As far as I know, there is no international Esperanto police force putting the boot into the workers.

Another problem with English is, though it may be a relatively simple language if you want to learn the basics, a non-native speaker will still always be at a disadvantage. In fact English is riddled with countless bizarre and often incomprehensible grammatical forms, completely illogical phrases, strange idioms, as well as

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True. But English is the international language of business, the multinationals, power, imperialism, etc. In many parts of the world English has been forced on people, in some cases literally at the point of a gun. Esperanto on the other hand, is not the property of any class, nation, corporation or government. As far as I know, there is no international Esperanto police force putting the boot into the workers.

Another problem with English is, though it may be a relatively simple language if you want to learn the basics, a non-native speaker will still always be at a disadvantage. In fact English is riddled with countless bizarre and often incomprehensible grammatical forms, completely illogical phrases, strange idioms, as well as weird spelling and pronunciation. In the end, English for the non-native speaker is yet another barrier to international communication. Much the same problems tend to apply to all other national languages.

With Esperanto, however, everyone is a non-native speaker and therefore everyone is relatively equal — no one has the linguistic advantage. It is also incredibly simple and can be learned in a very short time. In other words, you don't have to be a linguistic egghead to benefit from it. Pronunciation is phonetic. The grammar is completely regular. There are no irregularities to painfully memorise with Esperanto. So, once you learn the basics, that's more or less it. It's then simply a matter of putting it into practice and gaining the experience.

We anarchist communists often talk about creating a "culture of resistance". Well, on the international front, Esperanto can greatly contribute to that goal if we use it for the purpose of international resistance. But it's up to us to build on this. I'm not saying that every class-conscious worker in the world has to learn Esperanto (though that wouldn't be a bad thing). Yet Esperanto, should we choose to use it, is a very useful tool, which can only help the class struggle.

A bit of history

Anyone who's read our excellent pamphlet *The Anarchist Movement in Japan* will notice that some of the reprinted pages from the old anarcho-communist journals are in two languages: Japanese and Esperanto. In the early part of the 20th century a group of Esperantists were executed by the Japanese state for their anarchist activities.

In fact, anarchists have historically been at the forefront of the international workers' Esperanto movement practically from day one. The first anarcho-esperantist group was formed in Stockholm in 1905. This was followed by the influential Peace-Freedom group based in Paris in 1906. Meanwhile, in China and Japan, anarchists began publishing the Esperanto journals *The Voice of the People* and *New Century*. The influential Chinese anarchist Shin Fu was an Esperantist and the famous anarchist writer Ba Jin originally wrote his novella *Springtime in Autumn* in Esperanto (later published in English, by the way). I believe Malatesta also understood the international language. Moreover, in 1907 the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam adopted a resolution to support the use of Esperanto. Subsequent conferences reaffirmed this aim.

In the early 1920s, the Ukrainian anarchists A. Levandovski and J. Zilberfarb founded the International Language Scientific Anarchist Library (ISAB). The ISAB called for the formation of a world anarcho-esperantist organisation. With the help of S. Haydovski and N. Futerfas in Russia, the French anarchist Julio Migny and others, the World League of Non-Statist Esperantists (TLES) was eventually formed. TLES had member sections in 15 countries and published the journal Free Worker from Berlin.

Between the two world wars, anarchists in Bulgaria published the journal The Worker, which was later transferred to Stockholm. Meanwhile, repression in Japan forced the Esperanto journal *The Anarchist* to close down when its editors were jailed. In Spain 1936-1939 the CNT-FAI regularly published its Esperanto information bulletin from Barcelona.

The carnage and destruction of World War 2 saw the end of TLES. However, in 1946 the journal Non-Statist began from Paris, published by the provisional Centre for International Anarchist Youth. These comrades carried on some of the work of the old TLES. In 1969, the anarchist fraction of the World Non-nationalist Association (SAT) began the journal *Liberecana Ligilo* (Libertarian Bond), which continues to this day — currently edited in Belgium.

The scene today

It goes without saying that not all Esperantists are revolutionary anarchists, far from it. The biggest international organisation is the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), which is represented in this country by the British Esperanto Association (EAB). Traditionally, it has always aimed to be politically neutral in its orientation. The second biggest organisation is the World Non-nationalist Association (SAT). Since its foundation in 1921, the SAT has traditionally held a class struggle approach, seeing Esperanto as a tool to bring workers of different countries together and to further the workers' cause on the international front. The SAT publishes a monthly journal Sennaciulo (Non-nationalist) and has members across the globe. It provides the means for its members to directly communicate with their fellow workers overseas. Its British affiliate is SATEB (i.e. SAT in Britain) who publish *La Verda Proleto* (The Green Proletarian — green traditionally being the colour of the Esperanto movement).

SAT in Britain is predominantly leftist, although I have to say, very friendly and open. Though the international SAT is a bit of a mixed bag of anarchists and various types of

Esperanto contacts

For anarcho-esperantists in Britain, contact the London group of the AF.

Liberecana Ligilo (Libertarian Bond)
J.Schram
Hof ter Bekestraat 49
BE-2018 Antwerpen, Belgium
Email address: j.schram@skynet.be

SATEB (SAT in Britain)
c/o P.Simons
The Cottage, 34 Beaulieu Drive
Pinner, Middx HA5 1NG
Email address:
arturo@signalprent.demon.co.uk
(NB: SATEB also offers a free 10 lesson correspondence course for beginners)

Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda (SAT)
67, av Gambetta
FR-75020 Paris, France
Email address: satesper@noos.fr
Website:
www.multimania.com/satesperanto/
(The Libertarian Fraction/Liberecana Frakcio can also be contacted mvia this address)

leftist. Anarchists are fairly influential within the organisation. The Libertarian Fraction itself produces an excellent quarterly magazine *Liberecana Ligilo* (Libertarian Bond). Interestingly, the SAT pamphlet series also has some pretty good titles, including some by anarchists like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Grave, as well translations of the council communist Anton Pannekoek.

Practicalities

Esperanto has the potential to be an incredibly useful and practical tool to further revolutionary communication and goals on the international level. It's also the easiest language to learn in the world and you can make yourself understood in Esperanto in an amazingly short time. It certainly has the potential to be the international language of freedom, resistance and solidarity.

Report from the Third Congress of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists: Quebec City, 10-11 February 2001

by Becky & Nicolas (Sabate Anarchist Collective)

Over 35 people attended the 3rd congress of the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) held in Quebec City on February 10th and 11th. Participating delegations hailed from Montréal (Le Trouble, Main Noir, and several as of yet nameless groups), Boston (Barricada and Sabate), Baltimore (Roundhouse), Western Massachusetts, and, of course, Quebec City (Emile-Henry, the hosts, and Le Maquis). Also present was a member of the Lyon section of the Francophone Anarchist Federation (FAF) who extended to the congress the greetings of the FAF and gave a presentation regarding the organisational model of the Lyon region of the FAF.

Several important motions, including the call for an anarchist contingent at the anti-FTAA demonstrations in April and for the publication and wide distribution of a four-page agitational bulletin about the FTAA and anarchism, were passed during the weekend. Additionally, the conference served as a debut for NEFAC's magazine, *The Northeastern Anarchist*. The magazine was well received by conference participants and is available throughout the region at movement bookstores and info-shops.

Among the most important accomplishments of the congress were the transfer of the General Secretariat of the English section from Prole Revolt (Morgantown, WV) to Roundhouse, the discussions around Federation structure, the acceptance of several new groups and individuals into the Federation, and the acceptance of several new Federation initiatives. These initiatives include an organisational tour to spread the word about NEFAC and aid people in the creation of new collectives, the writing of an international anarchist anti-FTAA statement similar to the ones written around the Prague and Nice mobilisations, and important organising for the mobilisation against the FTAA summit, including calls for anarchist contingents at the demonstrations of April 20th and 21st.

Two upcoming regional meetings will be held to further develop the French-speaking section of NEFAC, focusing on participation in the anti-FTAA protests and organisational and political questions in the region. The launching of a sister publication to *The Northeastern Anarchist*, a French-language anarchist-communist theoretical journal, is also being planned.

As NEFAC approaches its first year of existence, member collectives and individuals are taking the time to reflect on and discuss how to work most effectively within the group. As a regional federation, working within a framework of tactical and theoretical unity and coherence, we aim to struggle collectively, transcending national and linguistic boundaries. By sharing resources — study guides, speakers, discussion lists, publications — we will develop this framework over time. And through the collective production of written materials, we will turn our discussions and ideas into fuel for agitation and organisation. Over the next year, as NEFAC grows, we will turn our efforts outward, to organise and to link struggles in our local communities to the growing anarchist movement.

Contacts

NEFAC General Secretariat (English)
Roundhouse Collective
C/o Black Planet Radical Books
1621 Fleet Street
Baltimore, MD 21231, USA

NEFAC Collectif de Secrétariat Général (Francophone)
Groupe Anarchiste Emile-Henry
C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O.
Quebec (QC), G1K 1J0, CANADA
Note: the NEFAC website is at:
http://burn.ucsd.edu/~acf/neacf.html

Organise! on the net

Articles from *Organise!* can be found on the internet at:
http://www.afed.org.uk
You can also E-Mail us at
acf@burn.ucsd.edu

Harold Thompson

Editors' note: Harold Thompson has been a contact of ours for a long time now. He recently sent us the following letter. As we have published details of Harold's situation before, we decided to edit it. If you want to learn more about him then contact the Friends of Harold H Thompson, whose address is at the end of this letter. They are distributing From the Belly of the Beast, *a collection of his writings.*

Dear Organise!

I send warmest of anarchist greetings and friendship to all at the Anarchist Federation from the belly of the beast!

I am an anarchist who works as a jailhouse lawyer aiding prisoners with their legal matters, appeals, grievances and lawsuits in the Tennessee state prison system where I have been captive for 21 years.

The judicial system in this country leaves indigent prisoners on their own to struggle through the quagmire of the appellate process without the benefit of aid of legal counsel. Inside, I stay busy with other prisoners' legal work as well as my own, fighting the system from within, which is another plateau of the struggle where the brutal face of the capitalist monster is unmasked as there is no need of pretense or a civilized mask when dealing with prisoners. It is always a terrific morale boost when I win in court for myself or others, which makes the long hours of my work worthwhile.

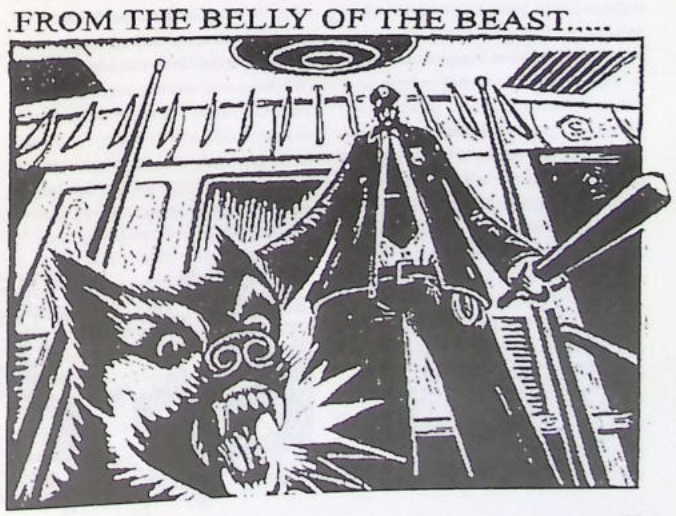
I am serving life plus 82 years in the State of Tennessee and am convicted of killing a murderer, who was also a confirmed police informant. In 1986, I attempted an armed escape from an East Tennessee rural gulag. After firing six shots from an automatic pistol and throwing two of three bombs on state property, I was captured by shotgun wielding prison guards. I was later placed on trial for escape-related charges, was found guilty and sentenced to 32 additional years. Prior to my abortive escape attempt I had been extradited to Ohio and received 21-75 additional years resultant of a shooting incident conviction there. During 21 years in Tennessee prisons I have served over eight years in maximum security solitary confinement but have never been broken and will never allow myself to be broken, bend or intimidated by the prison system and will continue fighting against injustice until the day I die.

Presently in court, I am contesting rejection and withholding of anarchist literature and correspondence with a civil rights violation lawsuit I filed in November of 2000 after suffering over 20 such mail rejections over the past year at this Tennessee Department of Correction gulag. This lawsuit has the distinct potential of helping all U.S. anarchist or politicised prisoners who are undergoing this type of mail harassment by prison officials. This case will likely end up at the U.S. Supreme Court with opposing counsel or me seeking high court review. It takes funds to properly fight a court case in the U$A so I am forced to call on my brothers and sisters in the free world for help with copy, postage, notarisation and typing supplies expenses with my two pending lawsuits.

In 1999, I was attacked by two Aryan Brotherhood racist cowards, beaten and robbed of my watch and ring. I had offended AB bigoted prisoners because I chose to help all prisoners meriting help regardless of race. It turned out a staff member was working hand in glove with the AB racists and was supplying them with departmentally banned race hate literature which was sent to her from a racist organisation through the prison mail room.

The United States Supreme Court has ruled prisoner-on-prisoner assaults are not a part of a prisoner's sentence and therefore violate a prisoner's constitutional rights, making such actionable in court.

Aside from my own situation, a recent national event merits brief comment. This nation now has a new president in office resultant of Election Hijack 2000. Considering he is George Herbert Walker Bush's son, little George, Junior, this nation in all likelihood will be at war in a few years, or less, in some under-developed country or Iraq. Bush, Jr., it is easy to predict, will try to achieve his father's unfulfilled obsession of taking Iraq's Saddam out of power by any means necessary. He will propel this nation toward fascism at high speed, which will stoke the fire of rebellion in many working clan hearts. The widening chasm between the rich élite and working class poor will expand with Bush in office. The country's wealthy minority will enjoy the benefit of tax cuts with the weight of the capitalist system yoke on the shoulders of the working class masses growing progressively heavier with less jobs, decreasing buying power, less pay, more



homelessness, and less on family tables. Now is the time to educate and agitate by anarchists. Rough days are ahead but also the exciting potential for sweeping change.

I would welcome letters from anybody willing to write and deeply appreciate any donations sent to my support campaign to help with legal expenses fighting the system from within, as I am struggling on a shoestring budget in need of support. Anybody wishing further information about my writings, struggle inside prison walls, or me can also make contact with my support campaign at the following computer address of catherine.kay@btinternet.com. I will close and hope to receive letters and support from out there. Take care, stay strong and continue to struggle for what your heart tells you is right! Confusion to our enemies! They will never get us all! I love you all!

In Anarchist Struggle & Solidarity,
Harold Thompson, #93992
Northwest Correctional Complex
Route 1, Box 660, Tiptonville
Tennessee 38079, USA

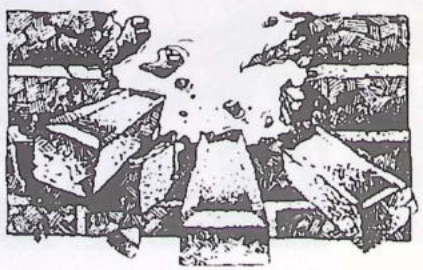
If you want to contact Harold or provide support, then write to: Friends Of Harold H. Thompson, P.O. Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, 0U21, UK.

Anarchists in Turkish prisons

Dear Friends,
Here is a letter we have just received from an anarchist in Turkey, about the unbearable conditions anarchists prisoners face in Turkish prisons. We have decided not to reveal the name of the correspondent.
5th MAY GROUP

"I have been an anarchist prisoner for five years. They (DGM, Malatya — DGM is a state security court] gave me 15 years because I did not deny my anarchist identity and ideas. I had to deal with all sorts of problems. In Malatya prison I was put in the block dominated by Marxist-Leninists prisoners. However, I was not accepted by them. I was told to stay only as an ordinary, non-political not as an anarchist. Only PKK (Editors' note: the Kurdish Workers Party, a nationalist party) accepted me, with one condition: I was not to talk to anyone about anarchism. Although they gave way a little after I insisted, they did not recognise my anarchist identity. They were moderate towards me because in the past I had defended myself in DGM as a Kurdish anarchist. If this was not so, I am sure they would have never let me in their block. I had no choice but to demand my transfer to Burdur prison. There were four other anarchist prisoners in Burdur prison. They were people who converted to anarchism inside the prison walls. Like many other anarchists in prisons, they came from leftist background. At that time I was tortured when I was arrested. Difficulty to breathe, liver aches, ear and eye problems. Most importantly, I had serious trauma. My cell had no air conditioning and my heath began to deteriorate even more. I was having problems with breathing and sometimes I fainted. I suggested to my anarchist comrades that we should demand to be transferred to a block with air conditioning. They agreed. But the prison authorities rejected us outright. We were told to contact the representatives of the Prisoners' Committee, which was controlled by Marxist-Leninist organisations. I explained to them about this matter. In the meantime, I could not see a doctor about my deteriorating health. I also talked to the representatives of MLKP (Marxist Leninist Communist Party) and PKK and asked them for help. They got upset. They refused to help us because we were anarchists, not 'revolutionaries'. They did not see us as revolutionaries. They told us not to cause any more problems. Me and my comrades discussed the matter among ourselves. We decided to ask for a transfer to another prison where they were no Marxists. Some friends told me to stay in one of the political blocks until my health got better. First I refused, but then I got worried because I was fainting more frequently. I decided to tell this to the representatives of Prisoners Committee. MLKP refused to let me stay in their block straight away. PKK, on the other hand, told me to stay with one condition: I had to be an 'ordinary' citizen. I was very much hurt and refused. In the meantime, some of my visitors from outside were sent back by the Prisoners' Committee. The reason was that we were not revolutionaries. (...) We were transferred to different places. I was sent to Konya/Ermenek prison. For about two years I lived there. For a while I stayed with Trotkyists, because they too were rejected and treated like us by Prisoners' Committee. Finally, I realised how difficult it was to live with Marxists. My own political leanings were the reason for this. My health was in danger in solitary confinement. I was sent to Ankara Numune Hospital and had an operation. However, they couldn't do anything about my severe headaches and ear problems."

"...As you can see, the penalty of being an anarchist is very severe. You are confronted from everywhere. I think this is something which anarchists have been highly aware of. I hope this letter would be helpful in informing you about the conditions which an anarchist faces in Turkish prisons."



Up Against the Odds

An Account of the JJ Fast Food Workers Strike Tottenham 1995-96

John McArthur. RPM Publications. £1.50. 42 pages. Illustrations.

The author of this pamphlet was a member of the JJ Fast Food Workers Support Group and is a committed anarchist. He notes: "The workers at JJ Fast Foods were sacked on October 1995 for organising against low pay and atrocious working conditions. Their activities in the dispute, and the support for them that was generated in the local community and beyond is an example of grassroots working class self-organisation at its best. It showed the vital part that immigrant communities can play in these struggles, effectively cutting across the racism and false divisions that are deliberately and increasingly encouraged and inflamed by politicians, capitalists, the media and the far right".

The run-up to the strike in North London and the appalling conditions, long hours and lousy wages (70-hour week for £100 is normal) faced by many Turkish and Kurdish immigrants is described. As John says: "significantly, the British State has continued to intensify its harassment, detention and forced dispersal of immigrant workers".

When 45 of a total of 75 workers joined the Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU) over summer 1995, the boss, Mustafa Kamil, immediately sacked their shop steward. Workers at JJ were working 60-70 hours a week for £130 with no proper breaks, no overtime, holiday or sick pay. A strike effectively started and Kamil called in a number of security guards, relatives and/or members of the Turkish far right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) who attacked the strikers with sticks. When police arrived they too attacked the strikers.

The workers then put large pickets in place. Immediately the full-time officials of the TGWU attempted to heavily control the pickets, making sure that they were 'orderly' and confined behind barriers set up by the police. The TGWU told the strikers that the pickets were not to be pickets and the dispute was not a strike! They attempted too defuse the action by starting process applications to an Industrial Tribunal. The police and especially the riot cops of the Territorial Support Group were present in force. The police harassed strikers at their meeting places and stopped them and their supporters in the street. Plain-clothes cops threatened workers with the threat of race checks and criminalisations of asylum seekers.

Burger blockade

With the aid of the Colin Roach Centre in Hackney and the Haringey Solidarity Group a support group was set up. Pickets of kebab and burger shops supplied by JJ were systematically set up.

Meanwhile the TGWU officials unilaterally announced in November that the pickets would be changed from 5am to 2pm, because it was 'too dark' at the earlier hour. This despite the fact that that was when vans came and went with food supplies. Fortunately the strikers ignored this order. Eventually Kamil, due to an effective boycott and vastly reduced deliveries agreed to negotiate. The T&G officials attempted to force the workers to go back at any price. They tried to get the pickets called off. They agreed under pressure to call a mass demonstration in North London. And then did nothing to organise it. When it was organised independently by the workers and support group they sent a hostile letter saying that the demo had not been agreed by the T&G and was unofficial. They contacted the police and told them this, effectively calling on them to ban it!

When the strike looked like reaching a successful outcome, with JJ risking going bust, the union attempted to persuade the workers that going through the Industrial Tribunal was better than economic struggle. They persuaded the workers to return but said nothing about being on the same terms and conditions

or in some cases worse ones. The workers rejected this, and the T&G district officials flatly told them to accept the new conditions. Only 12 returned to work on 18th March 1996.

As well as the direct sabotage by the T&G officials, the 'Revolutionary' Left also played their part.

Trots

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in particular cynically used the strike to attempt to recruit to their Party. When this failed they withdrew support. They also arranged collections in workplaces in a way which alienated support there — as at Hackney Bus Garage, where the SWP's visit resulted in a blanket ban on anyone visiting to gain support. They had attempted to swamp Support Group meetings with large numbers of SWP members and called on the workers to "push the T&G officials to act".

John describes the role of anarchists in the strike, which was enthusiastic and which encouraged self-organisation. But as he says: "It is both a strength and a weakness that anarchists were undertaking much of the practical work, but failing to put a strong enough case for breaking with the courts and the TGWU, and for complete independent organisation".

John is a convinced anarcho-syndicalist, and his conclusions that the way forward is through Revolutionary unionism is something that the Anarchist Federation would take issue with. "But that's another story" as he says, and the pamphlet is an effective and eloquent testimony to both the courage of immigrant workers and the role of the trade unions and the Left. I thoroughly recommend that everyone read it.

Which way the AF?

Dear Anarchist Federation

"He seemed to have nothing to do with any other concern. He replied to no other crow, but crowed solely by himself, on his own account, in solitary scorn and independence."

We may as well take this letter as an opportunity for complaining.

We regret the AF's recent inability to maintain a class analysis and its consequent subsumtion under green ideology. Have you forgotten the two main aspects of class struggle theory for anarchists are: (1) that the major part of the working class has to be involved in any revolutionary activity; (2) that the struggle of the working class is sited in the social and economic domain (and has no particular interest in politics)? It seems the AF have endorsed the direct action interventions of green anti-capitalists because the greens use anarchistic methods (but within the political arena); have the AF also adopted the greens' reformist programme through which the world can be supposedly improved, i.e., what are the short-term goals of the AF?

The anti-capitalists want to shut down multi-national corporations, if achieved this would constitute a victory for the greens, does the AF understand capitalism in this way? Would another form of 'debt-free', 'fair trade' capitalism be acceptable to the AF? We ask because we understand that capitalism is based on the exploitation of the labour of the working class and therefore no matter what form it took it would remain fundamentally unchanged at its core (we think this is the essential principle of class struggle analysis). In a similar vein does the AF consider the recent political changes in Serbia (the integration of that country into the European economy according to NATO's specifications) a move in the right direction, an improvement? When the owners of capital in that country remain unchanged? We are certain that the greens' claim of opposition to world capitalism is not an opposition to capitalism as such but to its current form and that their short term reform goals are their only goals.

Aside from the emphasis on direct action, the greens have very little in common with socialists, particularly anarchist socialists. The class composition of the anti-capitalists is predominately bourgeois, as activists they are used to workers not being involved, they practice 'direct democracy' within their organisations but are contemptuous of those outside. Their personal backgrounds mean they are practiced in being leaders and interpreters, it is a position they are familiar with, they are quite happy that it should fall to them to act and they view it as typical that the working class is not involved, they have no conceptual means of registering working class struggle or the values of ordinary people.

Are millions of workers moved to revolt by the example set by the self appointed gladiators of anti-capitalism? If the current wave of anti-capitalist spectacular actions were calling up flocks of recruits for the AF from the industrial working class then a continued focus on the World Bank and IMF would seem appropriate, if however membership numbers remain critically low then another strategy might be adopted after a thorough critique of the limitations of anti-capitalism.

Extremism

We suspect that the anti-capitalist movement has served its purpose for its leadership and that the intensity of its actions will now begin to pall and its (really quite small) numbers will begin to fall away. It is unfortunate that many anarchists equate revolution with acts of political extremism, ordinary people feel a distaste for extremity, particularly gratuitous extremity. This does not mean that they will not participate in a revolution, just that they need to feel the force of necessity and sense that there is no other way. In tactical terms we think it is a great pity that you have chosen to advocate direct action as the primary means of expressing your values because we are certain that in doing so you have chosen to inhabit a ghetto of political activists which very few ordinary people wish to have anything to with.

The principle of class struggle anarchism, as already stated, lies in the mass participation of many, many workers. If many, many workers are committed to the struggle against capital then their personal qualitative involvement would not have to be so great, if however large numbers are substituted by small numbers then the requirement on any given individual must increase, at the moment, fifteen thousand people are taking on the role of five billion, the distortion of perspective and analysis brought about by this arbitrary representationalism must be obvious to anybody who opposes authoritarianism, it also instigates a completely non-anarchistic form of evaluation where the acts of the few are valued above the acts of the many — do you truly believe that the actions in Prague are more significant than the events in any workplace in any provincial town?

The greens have no qualms about the make-up of their organisation (indeed they are greens because they are uncomfortable at the thought of being red, i.e., being dictated to by workers, being in a theoretical position where their actions are not central), their mission is to save the Earth, and by any means necessary; they have no need of delegative structure beyond their own self-referring because they fight for a political entity that they alone can interpret. It is curious and disappointing to us that the AF now finds more in common with EF! because of the latter's emphasis on its narrow definition of activism and direct action than it does with proletarian struggle. Extreme actions do not amount to a revolutionary position, the militancy of anti-capitalism falls a long way short of being pro-revolution. Has the AF asked itself the question: why should we spend time on fighting the World Bank, what is it we gain by its demise? Unfortunately the AF appears more ready to express solidarity with other political activists no matter what their class status because of their common engagements than it does to work within proletarian struggle. Are political activists no longer classed as a hindrance by anarchists? Perhaps this avant garde is now to be promoted, in the Bolshevik style.

It seems to us that the first goal of all pro-revolutionaries ought to be 'all power to the working class' — you have forgotten this (we cite as evidence for our general position on the AF's greenward drift — the events listings page of your recent Resistance which numbers 'green fairs' in its dates to watch).

We have personal respect for several greens of our acquaintance, their integrity and their quality as human beings is not to be doubted, we have no wish to belittle the efforts these people have invested in their causes but their causes are mistaken and theoretically ungrounded. The revolution must take the people (specifically the working class) and not the Earth as subject and object. If the AF is substituting the masses with the militant acts of a few in its programme then it has made a grave strategic error.

We are nobodies but as nobodies we call on all socialist anarchists to re-theorise their positions and separate out once and for all the confusion of social-economic struggle with politics. We'd like to make it quite plain that we are not making a claim for ourselves, we are not putting our position to the forefront, we are not in competition with any anarchist body. We do not appreciate the intimidating cultural machismo of anarchist activists and therefore do not wish to be implicated in its self-dramatising gestures, as with so many others our personal qualities would not be appreciated in the anarchist milieu which (in our opinion) has a deranged conception of what is needed — is not this derangement caused by the emphasis on personal extremity and the forgetting of anarchism's socialist roots? We are quite happy with our irrelevancy, the revolution is no more our job than it is that of the drivers and postmen who processed this letter. We are quite content with the current level of our activities but we do wish there was an equivalent organisation in England to the federations in Italy and France to which we could contribute our efforts. We see no reason why an anarchist federation in England could not have five or six thousand members in a couple of years time but something needs to change in the cultural make-up of those who currently lead the movement. On the other hand, if the AF gave up all pretension to be a mass organisation (becoming a closed organisation with membership based on invitation) and concentrated on producing tight theoretical positions, critiques and interventions both within the anarchist and the workers movement then this would serve a useful purpose. Or it could become an umbrella organisation linking up groups within libertarian socialism.

But whatever it does it should focus much more tightly and maintain a distinctive character, it should stick to core values and it should not run about chasing green votes in the style of the Trotskyists. Don't listen to us we are clownish buffoons, but whatever you do, model yourself on the crow of Melville's cock:

"who crowed not without advice; (it was) the crow of a cock who knew a thing or two; the crow of a cock who had fought the world and got the better of it, and was now resolved to crow, though the earth should heave and the heavens should fall. It was a wise crow; an invincible crow; a philosophic crow; a crow of all crows."

Yours, Red Robbie (October 2000)

Reply to Robbie

We think that Red Robbie is wrong on a number of counts. The first is in his assumption that we have turned our backs on class politics. The Anarchist Federation have always held the view that the revolution is the affair of the whole working class and not some small part of it and certainly not of a vanguard elite.

However, we think that his main problems lie in his apparent lack of understanding in what constitutes the working class and its exploitation by capitalism and he totally ignores the mass movements of liberation and expropriation in the developing world.

RR seems to take the view that the working class is made up of industrial workers alone or that we focus our attention only on environmental activism when in fact we try to publicise and support many different forms of struggle in many different places and situations. This may have once been the truth (though we doubt it), but today the picture is much more complex. Workers, that is those who work for a wage for a living and do not benefit from the expropriation of surplus value by capital, are seldom in a position of being obviously exploited in the way that, say, a nineteenth century mill worker was. Instead, they are part of a vast collective effort that is exploited by capital as a collectivity. Many of those who are maligned as being middle class are in fact part of this process.

Not only are we exploited collectively, but also the consequences of capital's exploitation are greater than simply alienation in the workplace and relative poverty outside it. Society as a whole is the factory today. Taylorist methods of control are increasingly being applied to the world outside the factory and leisure is produced and consumed using the mass methods of modern capitalism; facts that we are aware of even if RR is not. In most western economies, for example, the advent of 'just-in-time' production methods has done away with the need for factories and supermarkets to maintain large stocks on site. The road networks of the world instead perform the function of vast mobile warehouses. Therefore, whatever the ideological justification they gave themselves, however much they muddled their actions with reactionary mysticism, when roads campaigners were trying to fight motorway construction they were in a very real sense fighting part of the class struggle against capitalism.

It is true that this struggle has now largely ended and that those involved have been looking round for new 'actions'. Like RR, we think that the constant desire to move from one 'action' to another is, in the end, counterproductive. It may be possible to

mount an action against a business or a road, but how can you do so against capitalism? Readers should spend some time reading "Give Up Activism", which we reprinted in the last issue.

Power or passivity?

However, although we are concerned at the direction that the direct action movement is taking, that does not mean that we do not share its hatred of capitalism and its effects and do not from time to time find ourselves alongside them in action. For us the criteria is simply whether their actions lead to a greater sense of combativeness or lead to greater passivity. The idea is an old one, but it remains valid to say that whatever leads to a greater sense of power and involvement of workers throughout the world [and it is time RR broadens his horizons and understanding], acting in their own class interests, is a revolutionary action. The way that capital is destroying the planet we live on makes many of the direct actionists' activities fit into this category.

We do, however, criticise futile or spectacular actions, which others simply admire and can have no involvement in. We have, for example, found much to be concerned about in the way that groups like Reclaim The Streets organise themselves. That doesn't mean that we don't take a devilish delight in resistance being expressed through violence and destruction and the more than occasional place trashed by a group of angry demonstrators. Emotion is a part of revolution too.

We have given a considerable amount of space to discussions of the politics of direct action in both Organise! and Resistance. This is in part because so little else is going on at the moment. We would love to be reporting mass activity in workplaces and communities. Until that happens, we will continue to deal with the real world.

Finally, we think RR is wrong when he discusses what role a revolutionary group should have. We know we are small and we know that our influence is limited. But we want to change that. We don't think that the best way to do so is to get together with a couple of friends, bring out an occasional magazine and refuse to get our hands dirty. We'd rather make the odd mistake while engaging with others in struggle. We learn far better lessons that way and in the process hopefully don't go round sounding like a bunch of know-it-alls with the "correct (but irrelevant) line" on everything.

RR is wrong when he caricatures us as having mass membership pretensions. What we seek is mass resistance; the workers themselves will decide whether they want to form their own structures and organisations or join the AF or other groups. RR demands we change in order to claim leadership of a mass organisation (which we do not seek) or recommends we become a "closed, by invitation-only" organisation, something we decisively rejected when the ACF was first formed. Damned if we do, damned if we don't according to RR.

It is not easy to join the AF. To do so you have to agree with our Aims and Principles and our general political line.

Emotion is part of the revolution too.

You have to meet with members and discuss our politics. But our methods of internal organisation are less relevant than the level of our activity and the relevance of our politics. We think that by continuing to exist in this way we will bring more of our fellow workers into contact with anarchist communist ideas. Some will want to join us. In doing so they will strengthen our development by bringing fresh ideas and approaches into the AF, a process by which we all learn.

Red Robbie publishes a magazine – *Athos* – it can be obtained from:

Groupe Athos Magnani
Box A, Arjuna
Mill Road, Cambridge.

The Agitator

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The second edition of this directory is what it says it is, a handy manual to the anti-authoritarian movement in Britain. Includes useful website addresses, magazines and periodicals.

Revolutionary Activism

The Spanish Resistance in Context

Kate Sharpley Library. No price given.
19 pages

This pamphlet consists of an interview with Octavio Alberola, very active in the Spanish anarchist resistance in the 1960s.

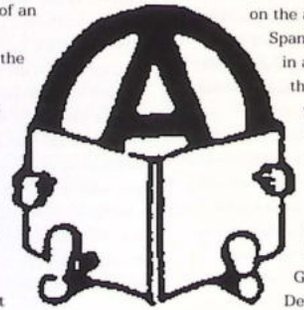
Exile

As a son of an anarchist exile in Mexico (later murdered in suspicious circumstances) he was one of those who rebuilt the anarchist youth movement in that country.

Moving to France in 1961 he look part in the activities of the FIJL (Spanish Libertarian Youth) which acted as an opposition to bureaucratised CNT (anarchosyndicalist union) leaders in exile in France. Alberola also touches upon the events in France in May '68 in some detail, and the connection of his grouping to these events.

Breaking with the routinism of the exiled Spanish libertarian movement, his group, organised as the First of May Group, took part in direct action against the Franco regime.

A section of the pamphlet deals with the garrotting of the Spanish anarchists Delgado and Granados in 1963, who were involved in an attempt on Franco's life. Another chapter, 'Sabate in Perspective' gives Alberola's views on the activities of Sabate, Spanish anarchist involved in armed action against the Franco regime, who was gunned down in 1960. He links Sabate to the newly emerging activist anarchism of the following decade in Spain, France, Germany and Italy. Definitely worth a read.



Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-commaunism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with , management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

Please put me on the AF's mailing list.

Name . . . . . .

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Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Revolutionary portraits
Anatoli Zhelezniakov

We continue our series Revolutionary Portraits on the lives of those women and men, who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Anatoli Grigorievich Zhelezniakov was a young sailor serving on a minelayer based at the naval base of Kronstadt when the rule of the Tsar was overthrown in Russia in February 1917. He was already an anarchist, subscribing to anarchist communist ideas as put forward by people like Kropotkin. He and fifty other sailors went to the aid of the anarchists in Moscow who had occupied the Durnovo villa, which had been owned by the governor of that city. They had converted it into a place for reading and discussion, with the gardens turned into a children's playground. It became a centre of anarchist agitation and the new Provisional Government tried to close it down. When some of its occupants seized the printing plant of a right wing Moscow newspaper the government ordered the anarchists to be evicted.

Zhelezniakov and the others joined the anarchists barricaded in the villa. After a government attack on the villa, in which an anarchist worker was shot dead, Zhelezniakov was arrested and sentenced to 14 years hard labour.

Escape

A few weeks later, he managed to escape from the "republican prison" as one anarchist paper called it. He restarted his activities and organised a mass demonstration of Kronstadt sailors outside the US embassy to protest against the death sentence imposed on the working class activist Tom Mooney, framed on perjured evidence and on the threatened extradition to California of the anarchist Alexander Berkman, whom the authorities tried to implicate on the same evidence.

He was elected delegate to the Second Congress of Soviets by the crew of the minelayer on 25 October 1917. That night he and a contingent of sailors took part in the storming of the Winter Palace that led to the collapse of the Provisional Government.

He was then at the head of the detachment that guarded the Tauride Palace where the newly formed Constituent Assembly was to hold its sessions. As an anarchist, Zhelezniakov was passionately opposed to all forms of capitalist democracy, and during the first day of the life of the Constituent Assembly he marched in, pronounced the words "The Guard is tired" and dispersed the Assembly for good.

It was ironic that this move by a libertarian and anti-parliamentarian was to lead to the rise to power of the Bolsheviks. Zhelezniakov saw the ending of the Constituent Assembly as a constructive move, coinciding with the development of soviets and factory committees that would take lead to the complete self-organisation of the masses. To defend the Revolution he then fought as a commander of a flotilla and then of an armoured train, in the Red Army. He fought against the reactionary White generals Krasnov and Denikin, and against the Don Cossacks of Ataman Kaledin. Then Trotsky began reorganising the Red Army. The egalitarian methods that had prevailed within it up to then, were replaced by the introduction of Tsarist officers in positions of importance and the ending of the mass meetings and the introduction of a strict hierarchy. Zhelezniakov protested strongly against this, as did many others. For this he was outlawed by the Bolsheviks, like many other anarchists.

Refusal

The leading Bolshevik Sverdlov tried to persuade him to renounce his positions on the Red Army, and offered him an

important position. Zhelezniakov refused this overture, leaving for the South and Odessa, where he resumed a military campaign against the Whites. Again, the following year, 1919, the Bolsheviks repeated their offer. This time, because Zhelezniakov perceived the situation as critical, he accepted and became a commander of the armoured train campaign against Denikin, who put a reward of 400,000 roubles on his head. He fought on until he was killed by an artillery shell from Denikin's forces, dying at the age of just 24.

The Bolsheviks, who gave him a state funeral in Moscow and erected a statue to him in Kronstadt, immediately turned him into a hero. If he had lived, he no doubt would have been imprisoned or shot by the Bolsheviks, as they did to so many anarchists in the Ukraine and to so many Kronstadt sailors in 1921. Indeed, they obscured the fact that he was an anarchist, even inventing the lie that he had joined the Bolshevik Party. But as he said to the anarchist Volin, not long before his death:

> *"Whatever may happen to me, and whatever they may say of me, know well that I am an anarchist, that I fight as one, and that whatever my fate, I will die an anarchist."*

ORGANISE!

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ISSUE 58

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

From this issue, *Organise!* will be produced three times a year. On top of producing our monthly newssheet, *Resistance*, this will involve a major effort on our behalf. We therefore positively solicit your contributions. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first.

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out for Mayday 2002.

All contributions for *Organise!* should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has signed the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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Organise! back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

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Organise! on the net

Articles from *Organise!* can be found on the internet at:

http://www.afed.org.uk

You can also E-mail us at:

anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

Oil in troubled waters

Afghanistan – the other factors

This article is in two parts. The first was posted on the a-infos web site. The second, written by an AF member.

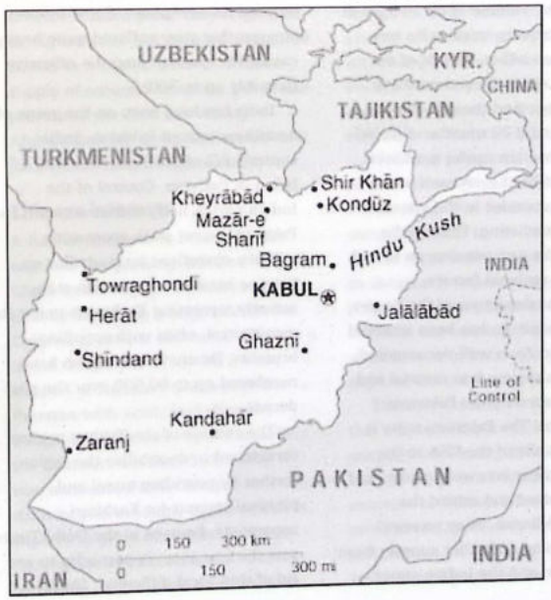
The oil behind Bush and Son's campaigns

By Ranjit Devraj

NEW DELHI – Just as the Gulf War in 1991 was all about oil, the new conflict in South and Central Asia is no less about access to the region's abundant petroleum resources, according to Indian analysts.

"US influence and military presence in Afghanistan and the Central Asian states, not unlike that over the oil-rich Gulf states, would be a major strategic gain", said V R Raghavan, a strategic analyst and former general in the Indian army. Raghavan believes that the prospect of a western military presence in a region extending from Turkey to Tajikistan could not have escaped strategists who are now readying a military campaign aimed at changing the political order in Afghanistan, accused by the United States of harbouring Osama bin Laden.

Where the 'great game' in Afghanistan was once about czars and commissars seeking access to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf, today it is about laying oil and gas pipelines to the untapped petroleum reserves of Central Asia. According to testimony before the US House of Representatives in March 1999 by the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan together have 15 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. The same countries also have proven gas deposits totalling not less than nine trillion cubic meters. Another study by the Institute for Afghan Studies placed the total worth of oil and gas reserves in the Central Asian republics at around US $3 trillion at last year's prices.



Not only can Afghanistan play a role in hosting pipelines connecting Central Asia to international markets, but the country itself has significant oil and gas deposits. During the Soviets' decade-long occupation of Afghanistan, Moscow estimated Afghanistan's proven and probable natural gas reserves at around five trillion cubic feet and production reached 275 million cubic feet per day in the mid-1970s. But sabotage by anti-Soviet mujahadeen (freedom fighters) and by rival groups in the civil war that followed Soviet withdrawal in 1989 virtually closed down gas production and ended deals for the supply of gas to several European countries. Major Afghan natural gas fields awaiting exploitation include Jorqaduq, Khowaja, Gogerdak, and Yatimtaq, all of which are located within nine kilometres of the town of Sheberghan in northern Jowzjan province.

Natural gas production and distribution under Afghanistan's Taliban rulers is the responsibility of the Afghan Gas Enterprise which, in 1999, began repair of a pipeline to Mazar-i-Sharif city. Afghanistan's proven and probable oil and condensate reserves were placed at 95 million

barrels by the Soviets. So far, attempts to exploit Afghanistan's petroleum reserves or take advantage of its unique geographical location as a crossroads to markets in Europe and South Asia have been thwarted by the continuing civil strife.

In 1998, the California-based UNOCAL, which held 46.5% stakes in Central Asia Gas (CentGas), a consortium that planned an ambitious gas pipeline across Afghanistan, withdrew in frustration after several fruitless years. The pipeline was to stretch 1,271km from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad fields to Multan in Pakistan, at an estimated cost of $1.9 billion. An additional $600 million would have brought the pipeline to energy-hungry India. Energy experts in India, such as R K Pachauri, who heads the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), have long been urging the country's planners to ensure access to petroleum products from the Central Asian republics, with which New Delhi has traditionally maintained good relations.

Attempts to exploit Afghanistan's petroleum reserves have been thwarted by continuing civil strife.

Other partners in CentGas included the Saudi Arabian Delta Oil Company, the Government of Turkmenistan, Indonesia Petroleum (INPEX), the Japanese ITOCHU, Korean Hyundai and Pakistan's Crescent Group.

According to observers, one problem is the uncertainty over who the beneficiaries in Afghanistan would be – the opposition Northern Alliance, the Taliban, the Afghan people or, indeed, whether any of these would benefit at all. But the immediate reason for UNOCAL's withdrawal was undoubtedly the US cruise missile attacks on Osama bin Laden's terrorism training camps in Afghanistan in August 1998, done in retaliation for the bombing of its embassies in Africa. UNOCAL then stated that the project would have to wait until Afghanistan achieved the "peace and stability necessary to obtain financing from international agencies and a government that is recognised by the United States and the United Nations".

The 'coalition against terrorism' that US President George W Bush is building now, is the first opportunity that has any chance of making UNOCAL's wish come true. If the coalition succeeds, Raghavan said, it has the potential of "reconfiguring substantially the energy scenarios for the 21st century".

Oil and the Afghan war

The article reprinted above provides one very compelling reason behind the USA's decision to launch a war against Afghanistan in the wake of the attack on the Twin Towers.

Since the Gulf War, US foreign policy has been based around a number of simple premises. Firstly, find the oil fields, gain access to them and if necessary go to war to defend them – this accounted not only for the Gulf War, but also for their adventure in Somalia, which sat astride major oil shipping routes. Secondly, any attack on the US or its interests will result in massive retaliation against anyone who can be implicated.

In the case of Afghanistan, however, the volume of oil and gas at stake is relatively small in its own right. Fifteen billion barrels of oil would last about seven months at current usage and the gas would provide around 22 months of global supply. These are useful quantities, but will not be the saviours of the western economies in the way that some are predicting. Finding the causes of the war requires us to look into other, regional factors.

Since the departure of the Soviet army, Afghanistan has been wracked by civil war. As is well documented, the Taliban regime was created and then supported by the Pakistani government. The Pakistani state is itself a key ally of the USA in the region. What is less well appreciated is who supported and armed the Northern Alliance. They received arms, training and other support from the Russian and the Indian states.

Russian and Indian interests

Russia was obviously keen to recover some influence in the region. Not only would this allow them to utilise the oil and gas reserves in its client states along the Afghan border, but it would also put to rest the turmoil caused by Islamic fundamentalism in those same regions. It was notable that, when the Northern Alliance began their push on Kabul, that the soldiers who appeared on our TV screens were in new uniforms and driving newly-acquired tanks. Likewise, the Russian Special Forces were quick to take up positions in Kabul after its capture. What is less well known is that Russian Special Forces were involved in the original Northern Alliance push as the war entered its new phase. Some reports suggest that they suffered quite heavy casualties spearheading the offensive (possibly up to 300).

India has long been on the verge of hostilities against Pakistan. India controls 2/3 of Kashmir, the other 1/3 being in Pakistan. Control of the Indian part is hotly contested, with the Pakistani secret state sponsoring military operations by guerrillas on the one hand and the Indian state actively repressing Kashmiris under its own control, often with appalling brutality. Deaths in the region have numbered up to 90,000 over the past decade.

The success of the Taliban regime threatened to destabilise the region further by providing moral and physical support for Kashmiri separatists. Sources in the Delhi Times saw the war as an opportunity to get rid of this 'local difficulty'. India, although formally allied to the west, has long seen its future linked with that of the Russians. Thus they also had links with the Northern Alliance and were more than happy to provide them with support. This had the added bonus of getting India firmly on side with the Americans, and India in return expected US support in its conflict with Pakistan.

This in part helps explain why Pakistan was prepared to ditch the Taliban and join the coalition. If India expected US support, Pakistan was desperate to retain it. Moreover, for the military government of Pakistan, the Taliban had become an embarrassment and a source of unrest in Pakistan itself. Pakistan is a regionally divided country with some parts barely under the control of any formal state. Regions bordering Afghanistan and further south, Azad Kashmir, were key areas of support for the fundamentalists who are at such odds with the modernising central state. The war provided an excuse to station government troops along the border in regions that had never seen one before.

The USA was not only interested in punishing the attackers of September 11 and, in fact, has never bothered to offer conclusive proof they originated in Afghanistan. Not only did it provide access to a useful, if not enormous supply of natural resources, but it also prevented the civil war letting Afghanistan fall under the control of a joint Russo-Indian regional bloc.

Chinese interests

A further compelling reason for the war was the growing influence of China in the region. Pakistan is already becoming a huge market for Chinese products. Moreover, China is a major competitor of the US for the support of Pakistan. China provides Pakistan with arms, including the design of its nuclear capable missile, the Shaheen. On New Year's Day, it was announced that China is now the sixth largest economy in the world. It expects to grow even more over the coming decade. China is the country bordering Afghanistan that has been forgotten in reports and analysis of the war.

After the attack on the Twin Towers, the Chinese secret service, the MSS, reported that the US was about to sign an agreement with Russia to enable it to launch the war. They saw this, rightly, as the most significant change in the international situation since China and Russia fell out in 1962. There is some evidence that this led to China either supporting or increasing support for the Taliban regime. Certainly, 15 dead Chinese soldiers were found at Kandahar where they had been escorts for one of bin Laden's senior lieutenants, Basir al Masri. Chinese soldiers also fought alongside Taliban and al Qaeda forces in the battles of Konduz and Kandahar. When the Tora Bora caves were captured, the US found large quantities of Chinese arms.

In the 19th century, the British and Russians fought over Afghanistan to control access to the warm water ports of Pakistan. Now it looks like a new alliance is playing a very similar game. Currently, Russia is weak in terms of international power. It is willing to side with the USA (and also India – long in conflict with China), to secure its own southern borders and control over client states from its increasingly strong Chinese neighbour. For the USA, a potentially powerful rival is kept hemmed in and its own influence in Pakistan is increased.

From our perspective, this new alliance shows that the US is planning for the long term future, as well as securing access to raw materials that should come online around 2010, just as demand is expected to peak. It also presages future potential conflict between the existing Superpower and what is sure to become its major regional rival in future years.

The only reasons for the scale of this war have been economic and geopolitical. Clearly, ideology has had little to do with it. Attacking the excesses of Taliban Islamic fascism provides an apparently acceptable justification for going to war, but states never go to war or the sake of an ideology. US history proves that it will cosy up to any vile regime if it sees its own interests as benefiting from such a course of action. We are confident that even without the attack on the Twin Towers the USA would have eventually found an excuse to intervene in Afghanistan.

More worryingly still, the 'War on Terrorism' makes a lot of sense if it heralds a concerted US campaign to gain control of as many sources of energy as possible. If the oil fields around Afghanistan do not offer sufficient hope of staving off the oil crisis for long, they do if combined with control of other minor sources. We can expect the USA to meddle in other countries under the guise of attacking al Qaeda. Targets already identified include Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, all important for the oil industry. We can predict a rising of international tensions and a move into more general open warfare.

As anarchists, we see once again that war, for all its flowery rhetoric, is fought in the interests of capital. Those who suffer are overwhelmingly working class and peasants. That is why we have no hesitation in condemning these wars and in taking no side but that of our class.

Resistance!

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of *Resistance* means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged hard work.

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Then and now: **Class war in Argentina**

How should we view recent and ongoing events in Argentina?

The economy has gone into freefall with IMF-inspired restrictions on the movement of capital (even down to ordinary withdrawals from bank accounts). Sections of the middle and working classes are threatened with immediate impoverishment. Loans on a whole range of things have been taken out in dollars but must now be repaid in heavily devalued pesos. High utility bills and taxes forced upon Argentina by foreign capital and corporations hit the waged. Diminished spending power has reduced the income of people in the informal economy far below the poverty line. A range of largely passive actions designed to gain a bare subsistence in the form of hand-outs (a traditional practice in Argentina) have been met with armed force, both private and state-sponsored.

The government owes $150bn to external banks and lenders, money that will need to be squeezed from the working classes through retrenchment and cuts in welfare. The chronic 20% unemployment rate is bound to increase despite the untold social misery this will create. A Radical Party president and government have resigned. The ruling class, fearing military intervention, invite a corrupt Peronist politician to take his place. His period in government is short as a moderate populism is deemed insufficient by provincial power-brokers and those who see political advantage from paralysis; the working class pay the price in arrests, injury and death on the streets.

The economic situation of Argentina has been aptly summed up as follows:

"The attempt to push through expanded industrialisation... led to a deepening balance of payments deficit which could be met in the short term by foreign loans while awaiting a hoped-for expansion of exports of the new industrial products. This foreign exchange bottleneck had inevitable inflationary results. As the deficit worsened, Argentine governments were forced to turn to traditional agricultural exports in order to pay interest on foreign debt and maintain industrial inputs. To increase the value of these exports at a time when world market prices for them were generally declining, Argentina resorted to successive devaluations [which] helped fuel an inflationary spiral."

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Then and now

But this was Argentina of the 1960s, not today. The government's solution, the same as today, was: *"an emergency, IMF-sponsored stabilisation plan...to restrict industrial production by limiting credit and squeezing the home market by salary limits and increases in public tariffs... The result for the working class was immediate and drastic: an industrial recession which saw unemployment rise dramatically... and continuing high levels of inflation which inevitably adversely affected real wages".*

If social relations and the prospects for revolutionary change are at least partially dictated by economic forces, what can those battling on the streets today learn from this period in Argentina's history?

In 1955, the charismatic populist, Peron, was overthrown in a military coup. Peron had created a social and political power-base focused on the large industrial unions and their federation, the CGT. His power initially came from the strength of the organised working class, which had adopted the syndicalist and increasingly anarcho-syndicalist method of organisation. But the CGT allowed itself to be absorbed within a corporatist state and a corrupt union bureaucracy developed.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s a series of social contracts had been forged in which a Peronist government mediated between antagonistic social classes and forces. Argentina was highly industrialised, with an economy larger in value that almost the rest of South America put together. Argentine workers had long enjoyed time wages based on hourly rates, with standard contracts protected in a variety of institutional ways.

This period led imperceptibly to the creation of a political culture in which trade unions were an accepted, normal, even valued partner in managing society. The Argentine working class began to see themselves as an authentic part of *national* life, socially and politically, and with a positive role to play in shaping the nation's fortunes.

But this role and sense of self, which developed and intensified, had the unfortunate consequence of obscuring the self-interest of the working class, of confusing it with the interests of the ruling classes, often articulated by the union leaders and bureaucrats.

Peronist ideology was essentially corporatist, and through hundreds of decrees and laws, an attempt was made to thoroughly integrate the working class and its institutions with the state. Peronist union leaders depended on their relationship with a (Peronist) government to deliver their side of the social contract but *"this relationship implied a commitment on the part of the union leadership to the notion of controlling and limiting working class activity within limits established by the state; this implied... working class passivity".*

Peronist opposition to periodic attempts to worsen terms and conditions was often couched in terms of the *justicia social*, in liberal bourgeois terms, not the class struggle, nor did it have the revolutionary idea of (for instance) proposing worker's control of factories: workers and bosses were one. This cultural feature of Argentina made it relatively easy for the military and their puppet governments to isolate militants and those genuinely engaged in the class struggle.

After Peron's overthrow, the period 1955-58 saw intense resistance to government attempts to re-shape the social contract by dissolving or

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reconstituting factory committees, regional *sindicals* and indeed whole unions. Mass sackings and arrests provoked serious strikes, wildcat actions, sabotage, the formation of clandestine cells in unions and factories. As today, the city of Rosario and its environs was a centre of radical resistance which the army had to crush during September 1955. The aim of the ruling class was not to destroy the Peronist unions or their federation, the CGT, but to tame them: *"[I]f the unions recognised the need to stay within their own sphere, and if the corrupt demagoguery of those most closely compromised with Peron could be erased, then the Peronist-led unions had an important role to play in post-Peron Argentina as organs of social control and channels of expression of the working masses."*

Peronist ideology was essentially corporatist.

Working class resistance was, however, almost entirely defensive: "one had no idea in what way an insurrection could have been carried out, since there was not even a hint of organisation, nor could one glimpse the existence of any group with... authority", as one militant said.

The union leaders hesitated and a general strike in November 1955 was defeated. Why? As one union leader, Miguel Gazzera admitted, "We were satisfied with what we had already lived through, tasted and enjoyed. We were inexorably finished, totally exhausted" – an apt description of politicians and union leaders of the left in Argentina today, and an explanation of the total contempt for them held by the workers there.

The struggle continued and intensified, led by grass-roots activists and clandestine groups of militants who replaced those who had been arrested or who gave up, defending sacked workers and articulating practical grievances. As today, neighbourhood resistance groups were formed to give focus and direction to working class solidarity. Slogan-painting, arson and attacks on food merchants, sabotage of communications, power stations, Radical Party buildings and factories where slow-downs and poor production went hand-in-hand with actual sabotage convinced the military that some compromise was needed if their long-term aims were to be achieved.

Exiled in Madrid, Peron tried to organise an insurrection in terms we would understand today:

"All attempts at confronting the military regime where it was strongest, on the purely military level, were to be avoided. Far more effective, said Peron, were the thousands of small actions which would gradually wear down the military and undermine its will to continue in power. In the social arena, the resistance should keep the workers in a constant state of upheaval with strikes, go-slows, low productivity. On a more individual level, thousands of both passive and active actions should be undertaken.... All these myriad acts of resistance would eventually make the government ungovernable and prepare the ground for the revolutionary general strike which, Peron considered, would be the signal for the national insurrection."

But no political programme capable of unifying the working class or

creating a mood for total civil resistance emerged from Madrid. Nor were local union leaders, under intense pressure to recuperate the working class and by now hopelessly compromised, capable of articulating one. Divided, exhausted, incapable of creating the objective conditions under which an insurrection could succeed, they hesitated. The militants too were themselves divided: some favoured the route of the clandestine *commandos*, others (the majority)

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argued that reconstituting the unions and recapturing them from state-appointed leaders and officials was the only way to confront the ruling class on more equal terms.

Defeat at the national level – and, gradually, at the factory level, as strikes were declared illegal, strike leaders hunted down, working class areas patrolled by tanks and armoured cars and with defeat mass sackings – led to the rise of more pragmatic leaders.

Over time, exhaustion and demoralisation set in, coupled with fragmentation, with thousands of militants on the run or blacklisted; activists were increasingly isolated and alienated from the 'base'. The defeat of the *Resistance* enabled the bosses to introduce those measures to increase labour productivity (especially piece-rates and incentives for performance) that a confident and combative working class had managed to resist. The inevitable decline in living standards which followed was *"the result of political defeat, the overthrow of Peron, not an economic one....The government and employers imposed by legal means and the power of the state what they could not impose through the discipline of the labour market"*.

The long-term solution to the problem of class conflict, once profits had been safe-guarded, was also a political one – to allow for such conflict but to define and constrain it within the boundaries of a national consensus in which the working class would be forced to see itself not as antagonistic but merely a competitor for a share of national wealth, alongside all other forces in society. Frequent cyclical downturns in the economy in the 1960s made it easy for moderate union leaders like Augusto Vandor to gain tight control of organised labour and crush dissent through the *burocracia sindical* in the name of protecting workers and their institutions; so long as they did the bidding of the military or the Ministry of Labour, they were safe.

Rejecting revolutionary syndicalism, leaders like Vandor increasingly made use of the electoral power of Peronism, mobilising the working classes to vote for union candidates, a strategy that brought important gains but only for the leaders themselves. The leaders gained power by threatening pro-Peronist mobilisations and electing Peronist slates of candidates (and often won concessions from the ruling class). Their mistake (inevitable given the nature of Peronism) was to believe that policies necessary to effect changes in the Argentine economy could be implemented within a context of class consensus.

Compromise

A historic compromise throughout the 1960s resulted. The union leaders would control their militants and in return were allowed to rebuild their power base on the back of large welfare programmes. The state would pass laws giving it the right to control union affairs and in return union leaders would get access to government and an understanding of their difficulties. Now controlling vast areas of patronage via the political spoils system, corruption began to run uncontrollably through the institutions of labour and its parallel political formations. Unions became big business, with laws passed to make workers pay union dues, to contribute to the unions' social and welfare programmes and unions getting a share of any wage increase negotiated. Union leaders were also rewarded with laws that made it very difficult for opposition candidates or lists to win elections, which effectively secured their power.

Inevitably this could not last. In 1969, an authoritarian president with an agenda to rationalise the Argentine economy and modernise the Argentine state took power. The union leaders were immediately forced to respond to a wholly unlooked-for series of threats and into crisis. As in Argentina today: *"the crisis of leadership was characterised by a number of features: a growing problem vis-à-vis their rank and file at a time of radicalised social conflict; the emergence of a vigorous opposition movement within the unions; a growing problem of internal divisions amongst themselves; and an increasing danger of isolation as their traditional domination within the movement was challenged by new actors"*.

Political activity was banned and with it the unions' main source of legitimacy. An authoritarian economic plan to stimulate the economy through shifting wealth from wage earners and agriculture towards urban employers, alongside wage controls and massive cuts to the public sector, was imposed – solutions also designed to reduce inflation (which stimulates wage demands and cuts into the purchasing power of the middle classes) and reward foreign capital. Strikes and protests were made illegal again and the army and paramilitaries used to defeat labour action. Police powers were greatly extended. Under this blanket authoritarianism, reform of the economy was pushed through, but at a price of solidifying opposition, uniting previously competing parts of society and suppressing social forces previously harmlessly channelled by social institutions like the unions.

Once again, revolt broke out in those industries and regions most affected by 'structural readjustment', in particular Cordoba, led by mostly young militants opposed to *burocracia sindical* and the too-close relationship of military junta, employers and unions. What distinguished the ideology of *clasismo* and its organisational form, *sindicalismo de liberacion* was the frequent use of direct action, plant occupations, taking management hostage, and *paros activos*, unofficial and direct strikes which included demonstrations aimed at taking the conflict to the wider community. Years of repression, attacks on working conditions and poverty led to massive social mobilisation, given initial focus (largely because political activity was banned in Argentina or else heavily-controlled) through action in the workplace.

Years of repression led to massive social mobilisation.

This new militancy was intensely anti-bureaucratic and challenged existing models of leadership, offering personal honesty in contrast to corrupt or co-opted union leaders, based on democracy and accountability, constant consultation and the ability to recall delegates. Its strength was its questioning of capitalism but it aimed only to create a socialist society via nationalisation of production and workers' control of industry – more partial solutions which left capitalism intact. *Clasismo*, because of its ability to spread social unrest and action beyond the factory gate, threatened not only the social contract between unions and employers but also the military state itself. The initial unrest, the *Cordobazo*, had led to the resignation of President Ongania. A second uprising, the *Viborazo*, removed another.

However, as in Italy in the 1970s, the militant leadership could not persuade the rank-and-file to embrace their revolutionary aims. Democracy, overthrow of the dictators, a revised social contract, progress – these the workers and impoverished middle classes would march and vote for and did, forcing the junta to dismantle the worst aspects of its *Revoluccion Argentina* and reintroduce civilian government. But the factory opposition's consciousness-raising could carry them only so far. Failure to carry through a revolutionary programme in August 1971 allowed the Peronist unions to swing the workers back behind their leadership – a more moderate regime allowed political activity to get under way and paved the way for Peron's return (in 1973).

The events of 1971-73 are being played out once again. First, economic crisis, then social unrest and uprisings which the police and army cannot quell. The fall of a president, an interim president installed (the Peronist Duhalde), elections promised which will solve everything, two years of economic and social paralysis, then an electoral fix that solves nothing. The cycle begins again.

Back then the opposition could not go beyond strikes and protests. The threat of more militant actors, Marxist urban guerilla groups who unleashed a campaign of murders, attacks on military installations, kidnappings and bank robberies in the early 1970s, forced the ruling class and its allies, church, parties, unions, to close ranks. Out-manoeuvered, the working classes and their young leaders were abandoned after Peron regained power.

The new *Pacto Social* froze wages and prices, recreating the historic alliance of unions and employers. National reconstruction would commence but at a price the workers would have to pay. Business and unions were re-integrated into the formal institutions of the state, alliances made with rival parties to take the heat out of politics. New laws against terrorism were used to crush the *clasista* opposition, who were first removed from office in the unions, then sacked, then declared to be outlaws.

What lessons have been learned? Firstly, there are few limits to the combativeness of the working class in times of social upheaval or class mobilisation as we witnessed over the last few months. Secondly, without a unified set of demands that are achievable and organisational forms and methods that cannot be reclaimed (for instance, not just factory occupations but requisitions and expropriations), revolutionary forces will either be used, then isolated and crushed or will be recuperated.

The left parties and groups played their historic role of putting forward easily mediated demands in order to build support for an "independent,

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self-directed organisation of the working class with the aim of establishing a government formed by the workers and the people" (the Trotskyist MAS group) – as if governments solved anything! This was the role of the socialists in the 1970s too. But MAS has learned some of the lessons of history too, and called for "popular assemblies, plenaries, co-coordinating bodies, congresses and any other means that permit us to decide freely *from below*".

The *Asambleas Populares* that have sprung up have begun to develop as revolutionary organisations, putting forward radical demands. But will they go further? They demand things (the abolition of the Supreme Court, the freeing of political prisoners) but also need to carry these things through, by declaring the Court at an end, prisoners free to go and enforcing these demands. These popular assemblies call for those in power to step down or aside but have not (at the time of writing) posed the ultimate question of power, not who controls it but its abolition, by undertaking actions that directly confront the ruling class with the mass power of the working class. Any recuperation of the revolutionary forces is far more likely if institutional actors, in this case political parties and unions, have not been dissolved, creating (as it were) an open field where the working class and ruling class directly confront each other. It is clear that for this to happen there must be the capacity to organise both inside and outside the factory, or to form strategic alliances with political and community groups that share the revolutionary agenda.

The revolutionary group *Organizacion Socialista Libertaria* posted the following on the internet: "we were up until the late hours of the morning in each street, each militant discussing in his or her neighbourhood the best way to establish a minimal *territorial* organisation with the aim of defeating the state of siege". This geographic and political 'spread' creates the necessary critical mass of consciousness and fighting spirit which alone gives people the feeling that there is an alternative and it is achievable *now*.

These territorial organisations must not be of defence only. In each of the territories (neighbourhood, township, county and province) the *Asambleas Populares* will need to do more than agree resolutions and pass decrees but physically expropriate the ruling classes. By quickly forging territorial alliances around common demands (for instance via the *comisiones de enlace*), holding conventions of the dispossessed, entering those places (whether factory or *barrio*) where people await a spark, the workers of Argentina could go on the *political* offensive, taking power where it exists (in people's minds and on the streets) and abolishing it, through mass action against the institutions of the capitalist state – banks, shops, state-controlled media, loan sharks, police stations, courts – by abolishing or expropriating them.

First the means to live: food shops and all places preparing food taken over and production and distribution organised on an egalitarian basis. Debts (eg local taxes, to the utilities and so on) cancelled, the records destroyed. Power stations occupied and power lines strung to all who need them. The police stations emptied or blockaded, only those who throw away their uniforms and hand over their weapons to be fed.

Next, political and social institutions of reaction – parliament, courts, political parties, all forms of media, local bureaucracies, churches and so on – to be declared abolished, at an end, dissolved, their power ended, the offices emptied, their resources appropriated. And at this moment new ways of organising society would need be developed (as did not happen previously), using provincial and national "popular constituent assemblies" only to declare the power of the ruling class abolished and to decree its expropriation everywhere throughout Argentina (and, if necessary, to order a national insurrection against the remains of the armed forces) before standing aside in favour of the local *Asambleas*.

Obviously, for this to happen a situation of dual power must develop, but the decisive struggle will not be won if the working class waits for orders or for the ruling class to step aside. Only when the working class moves to take and abolish power can we call the situation truly revolutionary. If the people of Argentina have waited to be led, the revolution will not have occurred – not the siren song of the workers' state or government but of freely federated assemblies and councils, a commune of communes, must be the call.

Quotes in italics are from *Resistance & Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class*, Daniel James, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

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ADD

The craze for speed

Over two million American children, and thousands of adults, are diagnosed as suffering from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and prescribed the drug stimulant Ritalin (a street drug banned in Sweden in the late 1960s).

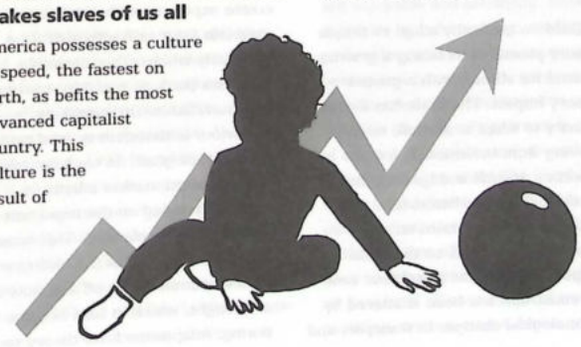
America has the highest number of ADHD children, with adult numbers also large and increasing fast. Drug companies and medical 'experts' maintain that ADHD has biological and medical causes (despite a lack of evidence), and suggest that 7% of the world's population (400 million people) are sufferers.

Studies show that while 'hyperactive' children become 'normal' under sensory-rich conditions, they begin to fall apart when the sensory stream starts to fade. Under sub-optimal conditions, children are calmed by Ritalin, showing that for many using it the problem is not an innate brain dysfunction (there is no scientific evidence of one), but developmental, the rise of a rapid-fire culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, which has transformed human consciousness, creating a nation hooked on speed and stimulant drugs that simulate speed's mind altering effects – coffee, crack cocaine, methamphetamines, and ecstasy.

SPEED – What we cannot control makes slaves of us all

America possesses a culture of speed, the fastest on earth, as befits the most advanced capitalist country. This culture is the result of capitalism and its ideology of progress, and speed. Capitalism as a system has to constantly expand in order to survive. It does this by finding and creating new markets, and by increasing the rate of exploitation. Time is money and profit (the measure of levels of exploitation) can be maximised where production, distribution and consumption occurs at high speed.

The time that working class people spend labouring for others (whether waged, or unwaged such as housework) creates profit for bosses. Speed is one of the main ways in which the rate of exploitation can be intensified, raising profits. The faster goods are produced (production lines, automation), the faster they can be sold. The quicker they are moved, the quicker they can be sold (road transport, the 'just in time' system which minimises the time they are in warehouses/shops). Computers speed up production and communication, enabling virtual meetings (eliminating the time and cost of travel), and the electronic transfer of assets (such as money). Goods and services can also be sold online increasing people's access to goods and the rate of consumption, minimising labour costs and eliminating the need for shops.



The faster people are transported, the faster they can generate profits through working and/consuming. Rapid transport such as cars, high speed trains and planes is essential for business people and politicians to have more time for their profit making and power games – "tell me how fast you go, and tell me who you are" (Illich). The next development is 'the 24-hour society' (which has already started, eg 24-hour shops). People 'will be able' (ie expected to) work or shop at any time, to prevent the wasted non-profitable time when people sleep.

There are strong links between speed, the technology that facilitates it, militarism and totalitarian states of both left and right (both fascist and Bolshevik). The futurist Marinetti (a supporter of the fascist Mussolini), wrote of "the beauty of speed... a new good... We want to exalt aggressive action, the racing foot, the fatal leap, the smack and the punch". The Nazis put money into land speed record attempts, and awarded Henry Ford a medal for his car making, mono-production, and anti-semitic politics. Hitler's great autobahn (motorway) project was an expression of the new god, speed. The Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky happily embraced the new capitalist science of time and motion studies (Taylorism, time and motion studies) in the 1920s to maximise worker exploitation.

PROGRESS – The future is not free

The mind sees the future as the place of imagination, thought and dreams: progress appeals to this future orientation. It is intrinsically an enemy of place, dislocating itself from mud and dirt, and of the present, which it seeks to escape, for a future which cannot be attained – tomorrow never comes. This is its appeal, even though people are surrounded by the negative effects: the polluted air, unsafe streets

and gridlock of car-based transit; Brazil and Indonesia ablaze (the fires visible from space); a working week as long as ever – in the 21st century (!); global warming and climate change. The appeal of new technologies, virtual reality, space research, 'pure' science (GM foods, cloning) is the appeal of change, flame and incandescence. The 'change' is often illusory, minimal, as speed has the effect of making everything the same: plant mono-cultures such as coniferous forests for agri-business, mass produced mono-job cars on production lines, same-every-time fast food (preferably drive-through), roads-to-somewhere-else where the differences have been (largely) ironed out by fast transit.

Time is an historical fact rather than a natural one. Christianity broke the cyclical worldview of time, substituting a linear, irreversible one (towards Judgment Day and the end of all). In Europe there was a shift from the extended family in an agrarian society with (largely) public lives, to the nuclear family, living private lives in cities. In 1800, 1% of the world's population lived in cities; by 1990 the figure was 33%. In England, the comparable figures are 10% and 90%. Urbanisation and the division of labour have fragmented and de-personalised social life. People no longer experience time as something they live IN, but as something they live alongside (and which is passing them by). Time is treated as an obstacle between the unsatisfactory present and the future promise of happiness. So we anxiously await the weekend and pine away the years waiting for an end to childhood/school/work.

Speed aims to collapse the gap between now and the future: it represents the two dimensions of time and space fused into one. The essence of both is as much psychological as physical – 10 minutes can feel like an hour and vice versa. Similarly, the world of the newborn child is so large that she has no conscious awareness of anything larger than her immediate surroundings. Cutting-edge technologies mean that the rest of the world is seconds away by phone and electronic highway, and hours away by high-speed train or plane. Despite this human mastery of 'time-saving' technology, and the prevailing idea that time is fixed and objective (incapable of being affected by human actions), technological and social practices accelerate time, making it scarcer. A future-directed society accelerates time, leading to the compression of time day-to-day and the under-valuing and under-experiencing of daily life. People lose the ability to relax and appreciate the moment, and so use technology such as cameras and camcorders to record their experiences (themselves distorted by this process) for the future, when they hope to appreciate them.

Children and speed

There is growing evidence that much of a child's brain development occurs after birth. There are one billion neural connections in a brain space the size of a large match head: consciousness and the human mind are emergent products of a brain with an almost unimaginable complexity and an enormous flexibility. In the newborn child's brain, about 4.7 million branches grow out from the neurones every minute, making connections to other neurone branches. Development must occur after birth because the brain needs life experiences to steer its growth.

Children live in an everlasting NOW.

Children gradually adapt to simple sensory pleasures, creating a growing demand for stimuli with a greater sensory impact. The brain has a great capacity to adapt to stimuli, mainly deriving from evolution: it focuses on important stimuli and ignores the "irrelevant' ones. Historically, there was a natural constraint on the 'loudness' of stimuli, so the brain's adaptability was not a problem; now the constraint has been shattered by technological changes in transport and the electronic age of film, video games and MTV.

Children naturally experience time differently, they live in an everlasting NOW which is present-absorbed, spontaneous and elastic; they have not yet learned linear, capitalist clock time. The younger the child, the longer a wait will seem: their life experiences are smaller – an hour is much longer for a child of four years old than an eight-year-old. Children's problems with attention, impulsivity and hyperactivity appear developmental: they do not appear at birth and it is difficult to identify symptoms in those under four to five years' old. Long-term research into child development shows that the quality of care-giving more powerfully predicts distractibility (an early precursor of hyperactivity) than early biological or temperamental factors. Factors such as single parenting and poor external support are affected directly and indirectly by rapid-fire culture and create the conditions for a restless and sensory-laden lifestyle for children. Some are over-stimulated during infancy and early childhood by parents unintentionally imposing their sense of timing on them, interrupting their pacing and interests. These family circumstances are likely to correlate with other distractions such as the pacing of the day's activities, and reliance on plugged in pastimes such as television.

ADHD symptoms are best described as sensory addictions, similar to drug addictions. Studies of drug addiction show that it is perfectly normal for psychoactive drugs to create experiences that encourage and maintain their self-administration, especially where other desirable activities (such as social interaction) are unavailable. Drug-seeking behaviour is therefore normal rather than pathological. As we have seen, human consciousness adapts to stimuli, focusing on the important and ignoring the 'irrelevant'. This is an inflationary spiral, as the excitement of new stimuli wears off and new ones are sought, which in turn become boring. Adaptation level theory says that the satisfaction gained is relative rather than absolute, because it depends on the individual's expectations (the product of upbringing, self, and the effects of advertising). Research suggests that chronic exposure to rapid fire culture during development can produce a chronic state of human consciousness that is highly adapted to a rapid fire world, creating a protracted sense of time and a restless pursuit of constant stimulation.

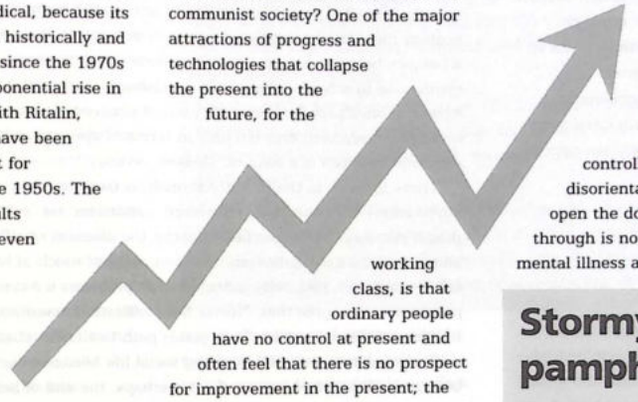
ADHD is also developmental rather than biological or medical, because its prevalence has varied historically and cross-culturally. Only since the 1970s has there been an exponential rise in children medicated with Ritalin, although stimulants have been accepted as treatment for hyperactivity since the 1950s. The rising numbers of adults receiving the drug is even more remarkable. European countries have far less ADHD than the US, for example Britain (although the incidence was 24 times higher in 1997, than in 1990). Children are 10 times as likely to be diagnosed as having ADHD in America than they are in Britain or France. Europeans tend to view these behavioural problems as developmental and psychological, they are also less common in Western Europe than America. In contrast to child advocates and developmental studies, psychiatrists (particularly in the US) ignore significant changes in children's lives.

A 1989 study examining children and adolescents over 13 years found a significant increase in problems including attention, sociability, anxiety, delinquency and aggression. Another published in 1993 found that up to 25% of schoolchildren experienced physical symptoms that were largely psychosomatic. In America the divorce rate is 50% higher than in Europe, 25% of children under six years live in poverty, 45% of children below the age of a year are in daycare, the figure is 66% for children under six years of age.

GO SLOW – Or why the boy threw the clock out of the window

We have seen how capitalist society has transformed human consciousness, resulting in millions of people hooked on speed and stimulant drugs that mimic its effects. How can we counter speed, to make life more tolerable and move toward a human scale and human speed, an anarchist communist society? One of the major attractions of progress and technologies that collapse the present into the future, for the working class, is that ordinary people have no control at present and often feel that there is no prospect for improvement in the present; the future offers the mirage of escape and a better society, for example the 'leisure society', created by computers and automations. People also often feel that society is too complex now for them to understand and control – revolutionaries need to explain that we don't want to control and run this society but to radically change it along human-friendly lines.

We need to promote slow(er) activities, not as worthy, hair-shirt things we should do but because they are enjoyable and satisfying. Slow activities include reading, sewing, embroidery and weaving, cooking, baking and brewing, art, gardening, self-directed play. Resistance to speed (and the ideology of progress) is part of current struggles, such as anti-road and air travel protests (the Twyford Down road scheme saved a huge three minutes from travel times) and the wildcat strikes of postal workers. We need to expose the ideology of speed as 'progress'. Slower forms of travel (walking, cycling, trams, buses and so on) enable us to reclaim the streets for simultaneous transit – as both travel, play (for both young and old) and the chance to socialise. The journey to a destination, particularly over medium and long journeys, should be something enjoyed, not endured. Mass, high-speed transport (cars, high speed trains and planes) has the effect of destroying the environment and making exotic destinations more and more like the towns and cities we are 'getting away from' – not something to be reached, merely visited. Human consciousness is not expanding, it is being damaged, packaged and controlled. The disorientating effects of speed open the doors, but what steps through is not freedom, it is mental illness and human bondage.



Stormy Petrel pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from AF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

What's wrong with civilisation? **Primitivism & deep ecology**

The threat to humanity of modern industrial civilisation has led to the development of complex ecophilosophies which seek to create conditions where a more spiritual and natural humanity can develop. Two of the most important are the primitivist and deep ecology movements. This article seeks to briefly explore the areas of agreement and disagreement anarchist communists have with them and explain why we oppose certain aspects.

First some definitions. Primitivism is a set of views and perspectives based on the idea of a natural and spiritual humanity in harmony with nature that began to disappear as civilisation developed from Neolithic times, to the extent that today humanity is alienated and desensitised, rapacious, and increasingly in thrall to modern industrial society's conditioning and control. Its more extreme proponents (like John Zerzan) propose a radical regression of social organisation and technology to the level of the hunter/gatherer. A sub-set of primitivism is anarcho-primitivism, a libertarian and anti-statist form of primitivism. The deep ecology movement comprises a group of ecosophies that are deeply spiritual, seek a balance between human needs and nature and propose a deconstruction of civilisation to achieve a harmonious existence. In this case, 'deep' refers to the extent to which the fundamental basis of existence is questioned; 'shallow' ecology is transformative but only in terms of systems and process – environmentalism is a form of 'shallow' ecology.

There is much in the primitivist analysis that anarchist-communists would agree with – try substituting the word 'capitalism' for 'civilisation' in any primitivist text. Environmental impacts, the diseases of affluence and poverty, alienation, the subjugation and domestication of much of humanity, the damaging effects of power, hierarchy, authority – all problems we can agree on. With primitivists we agree that, "Never has civilisation manufactured so many means for its own disappearance. To stop this path to suicide, change the world order and invent a new way of organising social life becomes each day more urgent because at the end of that road lies, perhaps, the end of humanity". We agree with anarcho-primitivists who say, "Only widespread refusal of this system and its various forms of control, revolt against power itself, can abolish civilisation and pose a radical alternative". But what do anarchist communists and primitivists disagree about, and is it important?

Population

A radical reduction in human population is a fundamental principle and aim of all primitivists and deep ecologists. An essential 'platform principle' of deep ecology reads: "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease".

Extreme primitivists believe that the total destruction of civilisation is a necessity and the inevitable rapid reduction in human population appears to be a price worth paying. We would argue that we would not like to live in the urban dystopia of 20 billion ravaged souls that primitivists portray but nor would we want to live in a rural arcadia of only five hundred million sturdy individualists.

How is this reduction to be achieved? Anarcho-primitivists at least put forward compelling arguments for a natural and beneficial fall in the rate of procreation and by reasserting their opposition to power relations, organisation and administrative systems, deny the possibility of (for instance) mass die-offs or death camps.

But, by rejecting all forms of social anarchism, organisation and planning, they deny the possibility of re-engineering of our social ecology in any rational way. The combination of extreme ideology, rampant individualism and the irrationalism of many primitivist groups and currents could easily lead to wholesale destruction or paralysis of technologies and systems of production and distribution, preceding and during the revolution – it is already happening on a small scale today. In such a situation, millions could die of pandemics, starvation, war and reaction. Without primitivists and deep ecologists accepting that common sense must govern this process and that we must engineer a social ecology generally acceptable to the whole of humanity and not just its extremist fringe, the nightmare vision of civil war between anarchists and libertarians to destroy or preserve technologies and the possible victory of the counter-revolution will continue to haunt and divide the movement. Without wishing to prejudge this process of building unity and consensus, we know that there are many analyses that suggest ecological impacts can be radically minimised and a fulfilling life (by global standards) guaranteed to all, including much leisure, without destroying the planet or massively reducing its population – let's look at them together and not let ideology drive out reason.

Civilisation

Primitivists believe that humanity has a natural condition but now exists in an unnatural state which is rapidly heading towards spiritual and possibly physical extinction. Most blame the development of civilisation which, by inventing certain processes (for instance mathematics) and systems (for instance trade), objectified and commodified Nature and alienated humankind from it. Civilisation domesticates individuals from an early age. It alienates and creates 'alien' emotions (longing, greed, self-love) which express themselves in conflict, possessiveness, the desire to accumulate and defeat. Most illness and disease, including mental illness, are direct products of civilisation. Modern medicine offers only palliatives or a further alienating and controlling hi-tech solution. Hierarchy, division of labour and the subjugation of women, states, priests, kings and armies are all products of a civilisation primitivists would like to unbuild.

Anarchist communists agree with the problems identified but not the solutions. Anarcho-primitivists offer a less than honest critique, claiming that 'classical anarchists' would do no more than radically reform society: "Although there might be some changes in socio-economic relations… basic patterns would remain unchanged. The Western model of progress would merely be amended…. Mass society would essentially continue, with most people working and living in artificial, technologised environments and subject to forms of coercion and control."

The abolition of money, wage relations, the socialisation of production and consumption with all goods free to use, an end to all forms of ownership and hierarchy, the end of democracy and all other changes needed to bring about an anarchist communist society are not 'reforms' but truly revolutionary. The concept of Progress is itself a social construct of capitalism and would need to be rigorously re-evaluated. If production and consumption are to be brought into harmony on the basis of human need and ecological sustainability, then all things involved in satisfying human need (knowledge, science, technology, production, distribution and propagation, exchange, communication and so on) will need to be deconstructed and changed in truly revolutionary ways. Civilisation should not be abolished, rather transformed into the revolutionary society.

Technology

Primitivists hate technology and seek a regression to levels of technology which would not be able to support current world levels of population nor

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Anarchism — As We See It. A new revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p & SAE.

Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by Georges Fontenis. A key text of anarchist communism. Though flawed, the best features need to be incorporated into modern revolutionary theory and practice. 60p & SAE. 6th printing now available.

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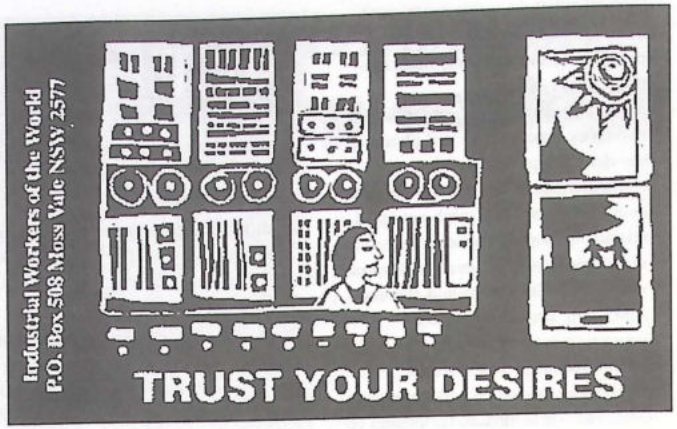
give access to many things beneficial to humans. Deep ecologists advocate an 'ecological wisdom' which grows out of specific places and contexts as guiding the use of technology and technics and reject the modern industrial monoculture currently being globalised. The Fifth Estate, a leading anarcho-primitivist project, "oppose technology or the technological system but not the use of tools and implements... discussions about the future should be predicated on what we desire socially and from that determine what technology is possible. All of us desire central heating, flush toilets etc, but not at the expense of our humanity". Anarchist communists would agree that the extent to which our essential humanity can develop is important. Where we disagree is that a society with a high level of technology is necessarily evil and self-destructive, viewing this as a consequence of capitalism's misuse of technology.

Primitivism and deep ecology criticise modern corporations and the industrial method but rarely address the role capitalism plays in creating and maintaining these monsters. The simplification of society we seek is the abolition of things like the advertising, fashion and sex industries, media whores, sporting heroes, education gurus, churches and cults and the institutions that allow technology to be misused to create them.

What is also missing from the primitivist critique is the role *all* people would play in deciding what is humanity, what are the essential aspects of *their* humanity and how and in what ways technology and technics can be changed to preserve and augment this humanity without unnecessary harm to other life or the environment. We believe that it is here that syndicates, co-operatives, councils and communes, despised by extreme primitivists as assemblies that 'mediate' aspirations and alienate people, would play a vital role as the forums within which ideas are exchanged, costs and benefits weighed and decisions made.

Some, for instance Zerzan, see all forms of organisation and collective



action as alienating and advocate a reversion to a 'society' of self-sufficient hunter-gatherers, self-realising individuals, natural humanity. Anarchist communists in contrast, see *society* as the truly liberating and liberatory environment in which humanity may find its greatest expression. Anarchist communists are often accused, with other anarchists, of being ideologues. Yet while agreeing with many that 'technology' is not neutral and that civilisation must be radically-reformed in ways that are sustainable and maximise both human individuality and sociability (both freedom and society therefore), we are completely neutral in our approach to *what* technology, *which* tools, used *how* and *when*. Technology is not a matter of morals but *what works*, within the context of sustainability and humanity.

Primitivism and capitalism

Strangely, for all their radical credentials, primitivists, deep ecologists and anarcho-primitivists are not necessarily anti-capitalist (although they do not like modern, global corporate capitalism). At least one website has links to a natural capitalism which "explores the lucrative opportunities for businesses in an area of approaching environmental limits", particularly through "increased productivity". Wealth in the hands of the wealthy (environmental) entrepreneur is all right, it seems! Anarchist communists would dissolve the illusion of money. The evils of accumulation, expropriation, property and ownership would be ended by the socialisation of consumption and production – take what you want but only what other people are prepared to provide or (more usually) *to each according to need, from each according to ability*.

Primitivism, in contrast, awards ownership to the man who builds and, presumably, power and wealth to the man who builds most – as if no master of guilds ever got wealthy from the work of dozens or even hundreds of individual craftspeople and shops, provided materials by the master, renting tools and machinery from the master, and selling what they produced to the master at the prices he set (in agreement with all other masters).

Because primitivism, as a system, can never offer human beings what they might want or need, it will inevitably involve trade, exchange and money, the means of exchange, and quickly regress into a capitalist society and a renewed statism. While spiritually radical, the deep ecology movement is also profoundly reformist: "In order to start the process of lessening our impacts, diverse strategies are vital, *in the area of business*, for example [including] back and forth play between workers *and leaders*" – the class struggle can wait, it seems, while workers and bosses play, from the bottom-up.

Spirituality & ecology

We profoundly disagree with primitivists on the question of humanity and spirituality. Firstly, we reject the notions of a 'natural humanity' that can be rediscovered and its more subtle idea that a 'good' humanity can only be achieved by regression to either a hunter-gatherer existence or an extremely purified and simplified individualism.

Modern humanity is a social construct, something that can be uncreated and redefined in the direction of autonomy, mutual aid and solidarity without any need to bow to the unreal. Many deep ecologists, worshippers of the self, seek to extend their individuality via mystical constructs – Gaia, the Tao, Buddha, animal spirits, Christ, pagan and esoteric forms and so on. Human beings become nothing – mere particles in some vast, cosmic life.

We have no interest in capturing Power, but seek to abolish it

Surrendering perception, ethics and will to something essentially unknowable and, in our view, non-existent, is fantastically shortsighted and socially dangerous. As revolutionaries, we accept that no future society can be built without the ethical development of millions of people, the development of awareness and understanding, their free and conscious adherence to its principles and modes of action. But if faith and religious fakery underpins it, what results? Cults, fashions, orthodoxy and heresy, mass consciousness without individual responsibility, the death of solidarity, the end of society.

Deep ecology, primitivism and the revolution

Primitivists, including anarcho-primitivists, accuse classical anarchists and the left generally as being reformists, proposing societies where Power would be transformed but preserved. If this were true of anarchist communists, we would be on their side – unfortunately, it isn't.

We have no interest in capturing Power, but seek to abolish it – no state, no government, no bureaucracy, no hierarchy, no hidden knowledge, no secret meetings, no memberships, no clubs or cliques, no family, no priests, no pundits, no heroines, no scapegoats. And, we agree, no politics – just "a politics of desire, pleasure, mutuality and radical freedom". To which we would add a social-organic conscience or ethic shared by all humanity.

Anarcho-primitivism agrees with us on the need to build a "community of resistance", to equip people with the skills to bring about a revolution and live it afterwards, "the bases for direct action and [sites for] new ways of thinking, behaving, communicating, being".

We disagree with the primitivist project and its casual approval of irrationalist and chaotic attacks on civilisation, its random un-building of society – this is not the revolution. Nor do we agree with the profoundly individualist project of the deep ecologists who see the radical transformation of society as either a personal religious obligation or an opportunity to develop karmically.

We disagree with the anarcho-primitivist critique of organisations because we suspect they mean 'leftist parties' and agree totally that "the kind of world envisaged... is unprecedented in terms of the degree and types of freedom anticipated.... So there can't be any limits on the forms of resistance and insurgency that might develop" except that such resistance must not be recuperable (as deep ecology and environmentalism can), nor purely irrational (as with primitivism) nor place freedom on a pinnacle ahead of co-operation and sociability as the anarcho-primitivists do.

It must contain within it the seeds of a sustainable, fulfilling social ecology, a free society, anarchist communism.

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

Black Flag. £1.50 per issue/£6 sub. BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

SchNEWS. Weekly direct action news-sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX.

Direct Action, anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation.£1.50 per issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW.

Earth First! Action Update, monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12 issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

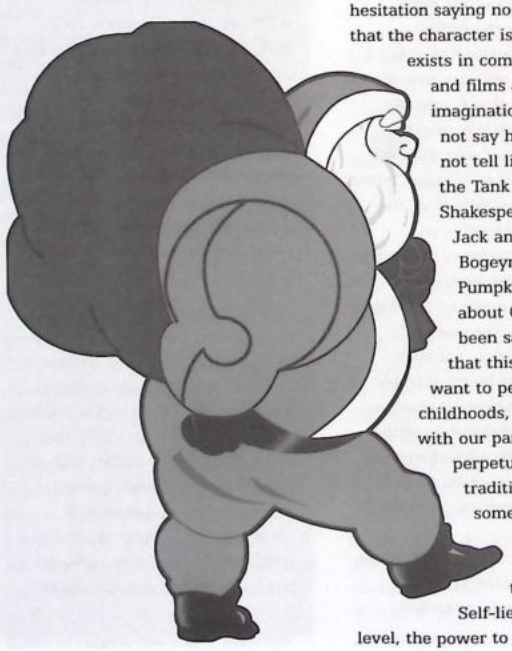
Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anticapitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet Radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, link to them through our website.

Did you give **Santa the sack?**

The arguments against the modern consumer Santa, the red-coated liar promising bounty or the solace of spending for people too busy to find out why they are sad or desperate, are well known.



Old Nick can be used as an analogy for other non-real phenomena and poses us two questions: would they have a role in the free society and if so what would it be?

One of the interesting things about Santa is that people of all kinds, but most importantly those responsible for the care and upbringing of children, actively participate in maintaining falsehood. They do it too with the bogeyman, that all-purpose persuader-from-fear, and others like him. Some parents invent imaginary angels and devils to persuade, bribe, intimidate or coerce children into obedience and conformity. Or they perpetuate an external myth offered them by society to achieve these ends: Father Christmas.

When asked by a child, "Is Spiderman real?" we have no hesitation saying no. We tell the child that the character is made up, that he exists in comic books, cartoon and films and in our imaginations too, but we do not say he is real. We do not tell lies about Thomas the Tank Engine, Shakespeare's Macbeth, Jack and Jill, Fungus the Bogeyman or the Great Pumpkin, but we do about Old Nick. It has been said, ad nauseam, that this is because we want to perpetuate our own childhoods, that we connect with our parents by perpetuating this hoary tradition of deceit, that some part of us dies a little when our children see through the myth.

Self-lies on more than one level, the power to be derived from a shared secret, the notion of progression up through a hierarchy of secret knowledge (replicated in religious and spiritual cults, schools, political sects, gangs and bureaucracies) all wrapped up in one harmless, laughing old man.

The ladder of understanding

When a child asks "Will Father Christmas bring me a present?" what prompts us to say, "Yes. If you are good". What do we learn from Father Christmas? I have no doubt that when young we benefit from the notion that there is a benevolent entity who gives without expecting a reward or exchange, who can be relied on each year to bring us pleasure and release.

Humans need a sense of security to aid in their socialisation, a sense that in a baffling world there are forces that are altruistically benevolent, that do not overlook even the poorest home or most frightened child. This stimulates 'reaching-out', 'curiosity', testing of boundaries. Unconditional love has become the bedrock of much bourgeois parenting for this very reason. But as we grow we learn too that one day that entity will turn his back on us, that we will no longer be the object of his love and benevolence. We become unworthy, simply by growing up.

Father Christmas also teaches about the hierarchy of worth. Why do some children get splendid presents while others do not? Given that few children who do not have to work for it understand the value or meaning of money, the unequal distribution of presents must have more to do with the recipient than the giver. If our parents loved us more, wouldn't they make Santa bring us the presents we really wanted, no matter the cost? Poverty is my stigma, and I am branded inside and out with shame and low self-worth. And this has a social aspect as well. Low self-esteem, shame, guilt about the presents we can't afford to buy or never received, envy of those who shop so carelessly, all of these emotions and others suck us in to the rat race of competition or bury the natural urge to kindness, which is a biological as well as cultural imperative, making our society mean and grudging and filled with deep self-loathing, barely admitted. Or is mental illness declining?

Tell me a story

This is the thing about stories, the unreal made real in pictures, words and music: that if we believe in them too much they take hold of us and our societies (en masse, because of the power of the media and the efforts of social institutions to exploit the phenomena), rather than us using them – which explains God, of course.

The unreal will always bring harm to someone if we are made to believe. The unreal can be changed and this change creates uncertainty, confusion, conflict. The unreal disappoints when it is discovered to be unreal. There is no fanatic like an apostate, it is said.

When we lie to each other, whether on the petty level of a parent and child or on the grand level of a society that wants to believe in lies rather than face the truth, great evils arise: wars, pogroms, injustice, intolerance, great rage and great sadness, mental illness. Is there anything to be said in Santa's defense and, by analogy, in the willingness of humans to lie to their children and others (and to create, disseminate and defend entirely non-real phenomena) in order to alter their behaviour or perception of themselves on a mass scale? Nothing.

Myths & the free society

The free society will still create the unreal through the arts and the mass media. But no-one will lie to another or deceive through their silence. If we have stories at bedtime, they will be co-operative acts, tales told by adult and child together – in this way a child will learn how to create and control unreality.

There may be tales of heroes and villains, told in pictures, words and songs. But art will be a participatory thing; all will have had their chance to create the unreal and so will understand its power and its limitations. Co-operation and mutuality is hard-wired into our genes, say the scientists.

We will learn that (when all is ours to use) the act of giving is a simple but by no means uncommon event. When all we have to do to receive (a thing we need, a helping hand, whatever) is to ask, all become equal. When mutual aid and solidarity with each other is universal and eternal, not conditional or provisional, will we need a smiling liar to open a sack or the doors of the church?

Supporting **prisoners**

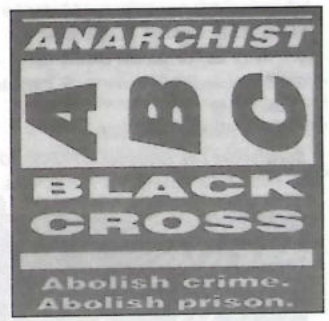
Ali Khalid Abdullah & the PPWC

Since referring to US anarchist prisoner Ali Khalid Abdullah in the previous two issues of *Organise!*, a number of people have contacted us to ask if we have any knowledge of the group Ali himself founded some time ago – the Political Prisoners of War Coalition (PPWC).

The reason they're asking is that, like some of us, they have written to PPWC without getting a reply, which obviously sets alarm bells ringing.

The contact address for PPWC is: PPWC Information Center, c/o Cynthia Ritsher, PO Box 554, Lincoln, MA 01773,USA. Understandably, the silence emanating from what should be a lifeline for Ali and other US prisoners is of no small concern to a lot of folk, not least the prisoners themselves. If Ms Ritsher and the PPWC are still active and anyone can confirm this can they let us know? Similarly, if you too have been met with a wall of silence.

There is an urgent need to establish whether PPWC/Ms Ritsher are still doing the business, particularly in Ali's case, as he is due a parole hearing early in 2002 and needs all the support he can muster. If anyone out there knows anything about this situation can they advise us asap please, so that we in turn can let both prisoners and enquirers know where they stand as regards PPWC. Suspended in limbo is no place for anyone, inside or out, to be. Comrades inside either deserve our wholehearted support and solidarity or we may as well not bother at all. There could be very genuine reasons for Cynthia Ritsher and her team not responding to what we know amount to many requests for information to help support comrades through PPWC. Maybe they are not even receiving mail? We don't know. Either way, the people who matter the most are entitled to know what is going on on their behalf. Get in touch please if you know anything.



Christopher Lee Plummer

Chris Plummer is due to be paroled any time soon, after eight years. This is great news and we wish him well.

However, this is not the end of the story. It is vital we maintain support for him.

We know that returning to the outside can be a difficult and traumatic time, added to which the slightest parole violation can send you straight back to prison looking at an even longer sentence, as all previous good behaviour and other credits are cancelled out. And there are plenty of people within the law and order establishment looking to send ex-prisoners right back to jail.

Chris is well aware of the hoops he will have to jump through! Chris's parole attorney is set to cost him $5,000 in addition to all of the above, a not insignificant sum for anyone, let alone someone who has just got out of prison. We are therefore asking anyone who can contribute a little money, however small an amount, towards these costs, to send their donation to the AF address and we will forward any donations on. Also, we would be interested to hear from anyone who could perhaps put on a benefit gig or such like to help raise funds. A quick whip-round at meetings would also be much appreciated. Please ensure that you mark any donations clearly for Chris Plummer, but make them payable to the AF.

Chris can be contacted at: Christopher Lee Plummer, 677345, PO Box 4500, TN Colony, TX 75886, USA.

From one shithouse to another

A tale of everyday madness in Britain's prison system

Sitting here in my allotted 5ft by 7ft space in the 16-man dormitory that will be my home for the foreseeable future, I cannot help but laugh at the thinking that goes into some of the decisions the powers that be make, not to mention the pettiness and total absurdity of some of the rules and regulations.

With only two weeks until I was due to be tagged and sent home with a new 'fashion accessory' on my ankle, the wisdom of the system deemed it right and proper that I be removed from my single cell (with colour TV and panoramic views – of the next block!), uprooted from within spitting distance of my friends and family, and sent on a jaunt to the south coast.

Having been a model prisoner (though avoiding any arse-licking I might add) I now find myself in the 'open' Ford prison having been, until yesterday, in the dark depths of Wandsworth (scene of the last hanging in Britain... arrghh!). Now you may be thinking, dear reader, "Shut the fuck up, you ungrateful bastard", and in some respects you would be right.

There are few other things about prison that upset the mellow experience for the passenger. I personally find the whole moving scenario a major pain in the arse. It can be a very unsettling, disorientating and worrying experience. I'm sure even the big-mouthed wide-boys get a tad stressed at the prospect of being taken from a settled routine, from a wing you have grown accustomed to, and then having to undergo the whole process again, with a new set of faces and rules.

For me personally, the move from a 23-hour lockdown in one of England's more unpleasant establishments to the relative freedom of 'Ford' has been a bit of a culture shock. Apart from the obvious distance problems and the fact that I'll have to reapply for 'tagging' (which may end up meaning I'll have to do all my sentence due to the backlog), I'm now in the position of not knowing what the fuck is going on – again! Although I do know that I'll have to work here, making some fucker a profit from my labour for £7 per week, yippee!

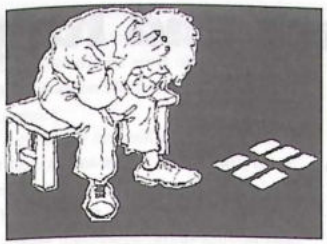
The screws here are keen to point out the error of your ways, if you step

The regime here resembles a bizarre Butlin's meets Boy Scouts meets the Teletubbies!

out of line. The problem with this (as in Wandsworth and, no doubt, many other penal palaces) is that they don't tell you were the line is! I can honestly say that these trained 'amoeba' have absolutely no interest in conveying what it is that they want you to do. The cons here are a bit more helpful though. In Wandsworth, if you ask a screw a question, the cons think you're brown-nosing. If you ask a con you'd be lucky to get a sneer, a grunt at best. A no-win situation! Basically, you were left to work it out for yourself which, in that environment, can be a rather daunting task.

Here at Ford, if it wasn't for my comrades in incarceration, I'd know jack-shit about the running of the category 'D' second world war airstrip-turned-nick (1960). The regime here resembles a bizarre Butlin's meets Boy Scouts meets the Teletubbies!

We all live in these bunker type dorms surrounded by fences a young lad could climb in seconds. The dorms are left unlocked all night and they trust that inmates will adhere to the nightly checks and stay snuggly in their pits. With such amazing rules as 'stand by your bed for inspection' (very Borstal, very 'Scum'). You can't



lay on your bed if you're not working! What? If you haven't got green work trousers on from Monday to Friday, you'll be reported, charged and confined to your dorm (the only way to check this would be to make sure a screw sat outside from dawn 'til dusk – totally unenforceable!). My favourite so far (and I've only been here one afternoon) is that you can have your t-shirt off, but only if you are not sunbathing. The authorities fear prisoners may sue if they contract skin cancer!

I mean, for fuck's sake, it's no wonder 15 tormented souls had it away on their toes last week alone! All I'm saying is, you wonder who sits around making this shit up!

Like in Wandsworth, you have a central hall, with all the wings leading off like wheel spokes. I came back from exercise one day (this entails an hour in a yard with several hundred other bods, walking around in a circle), I go to walk to my wing and I'm stopped, shouted at and told I'm walking the wrong way round the circle. Is it me? or would these masters of mind control not be better putting their collective genius together to do a crossword or something?

Anyway folks, just fancied a rant at the machinations of the prison system! Just shows that being a model prisoner doesn't necessarily mean you'll get what you want. So was moving me to Ford a good move for me? Personally, I'd sooner have stayed in Wandsworth, rather than relive my Army Cadet days, but I suppose things could be worse, a lot worse. Keep on kicking.

Sean

PS Thanx to those who bothered to write.

The 43 Group
by Morris Beckman
A Centerprise Publication
ISBN: 0 903738 75 9

The 43 Group describes how Jewish ex-servicemen and women formed a direct action organisation to combat the re-emergence of Britain's fascists after WWII, firstly on the streets of London and later throughout the country. It is a fascinating account of a hidden history of working class resistance and a manual of modern-day direct action campaigning, offering many useful insights into organisational methods.

After WWII, Jews were alarmed at the resurgence of Britain's fascists, aided and abetted by the Labour Government's complacency and often connivance of the police, town halls, watch committees and local magistrates, who defended the fascist's right to free speech but cracked down hard on counter-protests (sound familiar?). Fascist groups and parties re-formed, newspapers and 'book clubs' flourished, candidates stood and hectored.

After bitter and frustrating experiences directly confronting the fascists, only to be met with police strong-arm tactics and court appearances, 43 Jewish ex-servicemen and women met to form a group aimed at destroying the growing fascist movement. The group organised from the bottom up and by word-of-mouth with most recruitment on a personal basis, in cells but with access to the resources of the whole organisation, which grew quickly: taxi drivers provided transport and a quick getaway, people with fighting skills organised in flying wedges to drive in and break up fascist street demos and meetings, others worked in intelligence and counter-intelligence (some even joining fascist

groups), security (looking for moles, moving equipment). Contact was made with sympathetic policemen and journalists, and local communities mobilised against fascist groups and activities.

It was a tough job. Fascism was still an international movement, thuggish Nazi prisoners-of-war had remained behind in Britain, it could call on the wealth of the lunatic fringes of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie for money and influence. But the constant pressure of the 43 Group and its supporters and allies, notably the Communist party, paid off. Fascist groups found they could not organise and were under constant surveillance and attack, meetings were constantly disrupted, local newspapers began to openly scorn the fascists and indignantly call on the government to act against them, and the town halls, now aware of the depth of local feelings, began to deny them access to the school halls and meeting rooms that gave them an air of respectability. By the early 1950s, after years of struggle, the fascist menace was largely defeated – still present, they were not likely to pose a serious threat and did not again until the 1970s.

Attacked

An encouraging account marred only by the fact that the Jewish establishment, like many bourgeois liberals, attacked the 43 Group (which had, at its height, thousands of members and supporters) for being 'thugs', 'heavies' who delighted in violence – a sorry accusation levelled at Class War in the 1980s and 1990s and the Black Bloc even today.

Any activity the middle classes cannot control frightens them to death. A good read that repays careful study – the film, I am told, is also one to watch out for.

Anarchist Song in France and Italy

Part 2: Italy

"Nostra patria e il mondo intero"

(Our country is the entire world).

Line from a song by Pietro Gori.

Italy has a strong and vibrant tradition of song springing from the people and industrialisation has not completely succeeded in destroying these musical traditions. In the central regions of Lazio, Tuscany and the Abruzzo, for example, the tradition of *ottava rima*, dating from the Middle Ages was strong among the peasants. It can use poetry from Homer or Dante, can be completely improvised, or can deal with political and social issues.

Whilst Italy did not have the flowering of political and social song that came with the Revolution in France, the struggle for national unity and against the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian occupiers produced a number of songs. Among these were *Camicia Rossa* (Red Shirt) which sang with rapture of the red shirt worn by Garibaldi's volunteers. When General Cialdini ordered his troops to fire on Garibaldi's Red Shirts at Aspromonte in 1862, this led to the composing of the song *Rondinella d' Aspromonte*, which sings of Garibaldi's heroism and magnanimity. Garibaldi got two bullet wounds as a result of this incident and another song which is still recited by children was also created: *Garibaldi fu ferito* (Garibaldi was wounded in the leg).

Italy has a strong and vibrant tradition of song springing from the people.

Supporters of Mazzini and of Garibaldi during this period used songs to get their ideas of national unity over to the broadly illiterate masses as well as reading out speeches in the great squares. This awareness of the valuable role of song as an instrument of propaganda that developed with the nationalist movement made it easy for the emerging worker's movement, and the socialist and anarchist currents within it to develop their own repertoire of songs. Just as the anarchists broke with old imagery of the bourgeois Republican songs in France, so it was with Italian anarchists and the nationalist repertoire.

Pietro Gori

Gori

One of the most committed anarchists was Pietro Gori (1865-1911), who devoted most of his life to the anarchist movement. A lawyer by profession, he also held many others jobs, for example an ordinary seaman. He had an important role in spreading anarchist ideas in both North and South America whilst in exile.

An anarchist communist like Malatesta, he ceaselessly struggled for the free society. He penned his first anarchist poems between 1892-3, *Alla Conquista dell'Avvenire* (To the Conquest of the Future) and his three volume *Prigioni e Battaglie* (Prisons and Battles).

When the Italian anarchist Sante Caserio assassinated the French President Sadi Carnot in 1894, in response to the execution of several French anarchists, Gori was falsely accused by the Crispi government in Italy of being involved. Gori had indeed written a song about him and his subsequent execution, *A Caserio*, with a beautiful and sad tune and lyrics, but Caserio had acted completely on his own. Gori was forced to leave Italy for exile in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland. There, another campaign of false accusation was launched against him and other Italian anarchists instigated by the police in his home country. A botched attempt on his life was followed by pressure being put on the Swiss government. He and 15 other anarchists were imprisoned, and finally expelled from the country.

It was while he was waiting in prison at Lugano to be deported that Gori wrote probably the most beautiful Italian anarchist song of all *Addio Bella Lugano* (Farewell Beautiful Lugano).

Farewell beautiful Lugano, farewell my sweet land,
Driven away guiltlessly, the anarchists are leaving.
And they set off singing, with hope in their hearts
[...]
Ceaselessly banished, we will go from land to land
Promoting peace and declaring war,
Peace among the oppressed, war to the oppressors

This song was first sung as the anarchists boarded a train to take them into exile. It was recently sung at the funeral of an Italian anarchist who had settled in Australia.

Gori also composed songs like *Il canto dei lavatori del mare* (Song of the workers of the sea) and *Il canto dei lavatori della terra* (Song of the workers of the land) as well as *Amore Ribelle* (Rebel Love) – a love song to Revolution!

Gori's pure personality and sincere devotion to the cause made him greatly admired among the Italian working class. When he died in 1911 (his health broken by his ceaseless propaganda work), the train taking his body to his final resting place stopped at every station along the track where large crowds had gathered.

Of the same second generation of anarchists as Gori, the Lombard, Luigi Molinari, devoted much of his activity to editing a paper *L'Universita Popolare* and to projects of libertarian education based on the Modern School ideas of the martyred Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer.

He believed in intensive campaigns of education among the workers and peasants and saw the value of song as a propaganda weapon. His *Inno della Rivolta* (Hymn of Revolt) is the most famous of his songs.

Other anarchists of this period also penned songs, like for example Attilio Panizza and his *Inno dei Malfattori* (Hymn of the Malefactors). The occupation of the factories by the workers in Northern Italy in the years 1918-21 also led to a flowering of anarchist song. One of the finest is *Figli dell'officina* (Sons of the Factories), by Raffaeli De Feo. It counterposes class war to the murderous World War that had just ended.

Proletarian war, War without borders, We'll our red and black flags with the wind.

The organisation of workers defence squads – the *Arditi del Popolo* which were started first in Rome in June 1921, gave birth to the song, *Il Popolo degli arditi: "We are the arditi of the people, peasants and workers...Construct a proletarian front against fascism."* But the fascist movement against which the *arditi* had mobilised triumphed and with its triumph came massive repression against the workers' movement and the anarchist movement. Many anarchists fled into exile, many were imprisoned and any activity was underground.

With the development of anarchist resistance groups in the mid-40s came the birth of new anarchist songs. One, the song of the Gino Lucetti Battalion, named after the anarchist who had tried to assassinate Mussolini, *Dai Monti di Sarzani* (Down from the Mountains of Sarzana), specifically mentions Pietro Gori as inspiration.

Pinelli and Valpreda

In December 1969, a bomb killed 16 people in Milan. The bomb had been planted by fascist groups, and they themselves had been used by the Italian intelligence services. All of this was established much later and there are indications that the American secret service, the CIA, was also involved in what has been called "the Strategy of Tension", provocations designed to bring on State repression.

The anarchists were immediately targeted by the police. The anarchist railway worker Giuseppe Pinelli 'fell' from the 4th floor window of the main police station in Milan.

Another anarchist, the dancer Pietro Valpreda, was arrested and after a long imprisonment was acquitted and released. A large number of songs, many based on other tunes were created almost spontaneously during demonstrations and rallies. Some dealt with the murder of Pinelli, *Giustizia di classe* (Class Justice), *Lamento per la morte di Giuseppe Pinelli* (Lament for the death of Giuseppe Pinelli) and *Ballata per l'anarchico Pinelli* (Ballad for the anarchist Pinelli)

There's a coffin and 3,000 comrades
We were all clasping our flags
And we swore that night,
That it won't end this way
Povero Pinelli (Poor Pinelli),
Anonymous and innocent
You loved anarchy

Other songs dealt with the frame-up of Valpreda, *E a te Petro Valpreda* (And to you Pietro Valpreda) and *Valpreda e innocente* (Valpreda is innocent). There was even a sarcastic one about Superintendent Calabrese, generally held responsible for Pinelli's death, *Povero Calabrese*.

Songs were also composed about the death in a police cell in Pisa in 1972 of the young anarchist, Franco Serantini and of the imprisonment of the anarchist Giovanni Marini after he had defended himself against a fascist gang. Songs are still being composed, like, for example, one based on a local folk melody on the occupiers of empty houses in Spezzano Albanese in the South.

Alongside this tradition of song was the appearance of singers who can be likened to Brassens and Ferre in France, who made a living out of singing and who expressed a number of anarchist ideas in their songs. The most famous of these is Fabrizio De Andre (above right). Born in Genoa in 1940, he became heavily influenced by the French chansonniers, above all Georges Brassens.

His long career as a singer, until his death in 1999, revealed his anarchist and atheist ideas and his sympathies for the oppressed and the outsiders.

The one that shocked the Catholic Church most was his *Il Testamento di Tito* (Titus' Testament) which purports to be the views of one of the thieves crucified alongside Christ. His most political album recorded in 1973 is *Storia di un impegiato* (White Collar Story).

Other singers who have expressed anarchist ideas are the Modenese Francesco Guccini and the upcoming singer from Salento, Alessio Lega, who appears to be close to the anarchist movement.

What is important is that the tradition of anarchist song appears to be still vigorous, directly related to the social movements and not eclipsed by professional singers who may have some anarchist sympathies.

Revolution on the *net*

There is a wealth of anarchist and libertarian communist material on the internet. What follows is a necessarily selective and highly personal review of sites that should be interesting.

Solidarity texts

The British group Solidarity (early '60s to early '80s) was without doubt the most influential group ever to publish in the English language. A number of their key texts are available:

The Irrational in Politics, by Maurice Brinton. This text can be found at **http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Brinton/TheIrrationalInPolitics.html.** An excellent introduction to the politics of Wilhelm Reich. The author looks at sexual repression as a cause of mass support for authoritarian and fascist politics.

The Bolsheviks and Workers Control, by Maurice Brinton. A detailed account of the early days of the Russian Revolution, describing how the Bolsheviks effectively neutered, then suppressed organs of working class power. Available from **http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Brinton/TheIrrationalInPolitics.html.**

Hungary '56, by Andy Anderson. One of Solidarity's brilliant analyses of important periods of struggle. The Hungarian Revolution marked a watershed in left wing politics. For the first time a mass movement of workers sought to overthrow a 'communist' regime. From: **http://www.redthread.f2s.com/Texts/Anderson/Hungary56.html**

The Kronstadt Commune, by Ida Mett. In 1921, the revolutionary sailors of Kronstadt rose up against the Bolshevik state, and were, in Trotsky's words "shot like partridges". **http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/russia/mett.html**

Paris, May '68. In the '60s, the state and ruling class were confident that prosperity had effectively killed off the prospect of revolution in the west. In May 1968, the students and workers of France shook that confidence to the core. **http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/ maya.html**

Portugal, the Impossible Revolution, by Phil Mailer. With the fall of the fascist regime in the '70s, the Portuguese working class set about reshaping society in their own interests. This book is huge, it runs to several hundred pages. **http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/por.html**

The Workers' Opposition, by Alexandra Kollontai. Not all the Bolsheviks were happy with the direction their party was taking. There were numerous attempts to turn the party into a workers' organisation. One of these was the Workers' Opposition. **http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/koll.html**

Suicide for Socialism. An analysis of religious cults. "We're gonna die for the revolution. We're gonna die to expose this racist and fascist society. It's good to die in this great revolutionary suicide." The words uttered by two young men in Jonestown (Guyana) a few minutes before they, together with hundreds of others, poisoned themselves were reported in the *Los Angeles Times* (26 November 1978) by Charles Garry of San Francisco, attorney for the Peoples' Temple. **http://www.uncarved.demon.co.uk/othertexts/brinton1.html**

As We See It and *As We Don't See It*. Two pamphlets that set out Solidarity's basic politics. Still two of the best expositions of what it means to be a revolutionary. This pamphlet was rewritten in the late '70s. The most accurate versions are available on **http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/blasts/blasts.htm.** Also on this site is the Solidarity text, *Third Worldism or Socialism*. **http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/blasts/thirdworld/thirdworld.html** and finally John Crump's pamphlet, *A Contribution to the Critique of Marx*. **http://www.geocities.com/ knightrose.geo/marx_critique.htm**

Other texts

News from Nowhere. William Morris the artist was also a great libertarian socialist. He wrote his book, *News From Nowhere* in the utopian tradition. A socialist from the 19th century goes to sleep and wakes up in a world after the revolution has successfully occurred. This book sets out a wonderful vision of the future, with ideas and concepts of beauty and ecology that will still appeal to the modern reader. It is available in its entirety at the following address: **http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/stor/nowh.html**

Workers' Councils, by Anton Pannekoek. Written during the Second World War by one of the foremost theoreticians of the council communist movement. An easy read and a great introduction to council communist politics, though somewhat mechanical by modern standards. **http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/wcontitl.htm**

Other websites

The following websites are worth a look. They are not exclusively anarchist, but all of them contain politics that is of our tradition.

- *For Communism*. **http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/**. One of the most extensive sites around.
- *Class Against Class*. **http://geocities.com/cordobakaf/index.html**
- *Collective Action Notes*. **http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/**
- *Antagonism*. **http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/3909/**
- *Subversion*. **http://www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo**
- *Spunk Press*. **http://www.spunk.org.** An absolutely enormous site that will lead you to just about anything you want to know about anarchism.

Finally, a number of AF groups host their own sites, including: Manchester and Oldham: **www.geocities.com/anarchist_federation**

Letters

Black Block

Dear Comrade,

In what I've read of the Black Block it was never forgotten what they got right in the recognition of the primacy of the working class and that the key struggles are 'in the heart of the beast' rather than waiting for capitalist hegemony to be nibbled from the periphery. Whatever criticism I have seen to the strategy stemmed from the ability to lump with the class enemy anyone who is not already prepared to engage in the subjective refusal approach and treat the class as if its conscious was homogenous while it, in reality, consists of a variety of sections, different breadth of consciousness and engaged in different forms and levels of struggle otherwise it would be simplicity itself not only to organise workplace actions on bread and butter issues but it should be less difficult to show the class unity between workers in struggle here and in other sectors of industry or other countries but it, as every activist well knows, is not that easy.

Another mistake is to expect the same level of militancy throughout the whole class than in the factory in which it is possible to make demands like "If they offer $100, demand $1000": You can either 1) wait for a militant section of the class to spontaneously come up with a position and articulate that demand in which all you can say is how to picket or, in suitable occasions, occupy; or 2) try to advance a clear revolutionary perspective that involves taking the control of the strike movement, not from the 'class', but from the union bureaucrats that try to cap the struggle and use it as leverage to gain a more advantageous position in which to cuddle up to the bosses.

We need to strengthen the forms of organisation at their weakest point so that no worker will comply with redundancy and plant-shutdown or the crossing of picket lines and workers, consciously and collectively, seek control of what they produce. The problem is that the 'economism' (option one), used by some anarchists like Bakunin, the kind of 'trot' that hides behind the position Rosa Luxemburg took on "party and substitution" from before the Russian Revolution or like Eber, G. Lora or the late T. Cliff, seems such an easy way out, in that the most widely spread ideas are those fostered by the ruling class. To challenge those ideas requires theory and arguing against the system has always required a much higher level of argument than lobbying for compliance/apathy. This makes the revolutionary (option two) seem like some kind of 'outsider', whether called 'trot' or 'anarchist', even though s/he is working the same hours and getting the same crap pay as anyone else in that factory or production-line.

If you want to be factual, it is the reformist organisations such as CND, not the 'trots', who finger demonstrators to the cops, and reformists have always used censorship to keep a flabby 'consensus' together in that those who called for a principled anti-imperialist position were evicted with violence by so-called 'pacifists' as was shown in one of the demonstrations against Gulf War One, and these arguments are and will be fought and sharpened inside the anti-capitalist movement. It must be remembered that 'green' energy is not just 'muck and windmills' but the emerging 'over-unity' technology that are so non-polluting and free that, once on stream, no capitalist would allow them to be developed as they can't meter, control or sell it and never again will a single life be squandered for 'our' oil and we should get those military satellites, laser systems and missiles out of our space! (check http://www.disclosureproject.org for details!). Workers of all worlds unite!

John Johnson

Anti-globalisation

Dear Organise!

It's always a good idea to step back from the fray from time to time and consider whether the way you are going about things is the most effective possible.

But parts of your analysis of the anti-globalisation movement (in *Organise!*) read like an attempt by Mr Spock out of Star Trek to explain why emotion is illogical and feelings have no rational basis. A massive new movement emerges on the streets across the world, scaring the shit out of the politicians and financiers, uniting hundreds of thousands in opposition to the monopoly of global capitalism, forcing the authorities to react with draconian emergency regulations, imprinting the word "anarchist" on the brains of a whole new generation of 21st century people.

And your question is: "What do we think we are accomplishing?" Yes of course we should be getting the message across in our own communities, workplaces and so on — you can't only turn up for big events and expect to build anything. But they're not mutually exclusive and a lot of your readers are undoubtedly already doing both. The importance of the summits may be symbolic but, like it or not, symbols inspire people and move them to action. Big, unruly protests raise the political temperature in a way that committee meetings will never achieve. They create a feeling in the air, an electric crackle of revolt that may not be easily quantifiable but is certainly highly potent – that's why they cannot be tolerated by the state. I also disagree with the comments that a lack of formal structure "can open us up to take-over and manipulation by authoritarian Leninist groups". I would have said it was the other way round – it's much easier for someone, whether SWP member or state agent (or both?), to take over an organisation, locally or nationally, if there is a committee they can get themselves elected onto and key positions they can aim to control.

Working on a looser organic basis, which seems to come naturally to most anarchists, means people go along with something only if they think it's a good idea, not because some all-wise anarchist "authority" (as if there could be such a thing) has decreed it. Long may this continue.

Dave Phillips
worthing eco-action,
PO Box 4144
Worthing, W Sussex

Dear Dave

I'd like to take up some of your points about structures. In certain specific arenas, such as when organising actions, such a (decentralised, non-hierarchical) structure is useful in terms of not having leaders of demos etc, but in terms of organisation it's not. I would definitely

recommend you read (if you haven't) *The Tyranny of Structurelessness in Untying the Knot* (available from AFed etc).

In practice, the sort of movements you're advocating are dominated by informal leaders who thrive on the lack of a structure (which could shut them up and bring more hesitant people, unconfident about their ideas, more to the fore). Such groups preclude the involvement of most working class people as they represent friendship cliques which are created usually in middle class circles and, crucially, OUTSIDE of the meeting/action basis of the group/movement.

Outsiders are given the impression that no one is 'in charge' but quickly realise that this is not the case and eventually work out who is actually in charge and why things work the way they work (the basis of the power, the informal rules). Also, lack of structure is the BEST type of organisation for SWP etc to infiltrate. It often starts with 10 Trots turning up and proposing a vote on some bogus 'motion to send to Trade Union branches' or something – the SWP etc are already moving into position to take over. Attempts to oust them by this stage HAVE to be structured formally (unless you are going to physically fight each one that tries to come). But it's already too late because they can pack out the meetings at which these formal structures will be agreed on (eg they formalise membership to exclude people and win votes, they control the agenda even though its apparently created at each meeting 'from the floor').

If you are organising to take on an enemy, you need to plan a good battle strategy but you also need to build a castle to hide in when they fight back – and that's an organisation! (Sorry, doing too much medieval history at the mo.)

Claire
AF member

Manchester Radical Bookfair

Sunday 5 May

MERCI
22a Beswick St
Ancoats
Manchester M4 7HS

For details:
manchesterbookfair@hotmail.com
or write to Merci at the above address.

Manchester AF are supporting this event and will be leading a workshop on the day.

Sail Mohamed *Continued from back page*

director of *L'Éveil social* (*Social Awakening*), *le journal du peuple*. Following an antimilitarist article he was prosecuted for "provocation of the military to disobedience". The *Secours Rouge International*, a satellite organisation of the Communist Party, lent him their support, which he rejected in the name of the victims of Stalinism.

In 1934, the "Sail Mohamed Affair" burst onto the scene. The demonstration of the fascist and anti-Semitic *Ligues* on 6 February 1934 set off a chain reaction throughout the worker's movement. Sail collected arms and hid them. On 3 March he was arrested for "carrying prohibited arms". The workers' movement gave him their support, except for the Communist Party, which denounced him as an agent provocateur. Condemned to a month in prison, then another for "retaining weapons of war" he ended up serving four months in jail. He resumed the struggle.

L'Eveil sociale merged with *Terre Libre* (monthly paper of the *Alliance Libre des anarchistes du Midi* – see 'Revolutionary Portraits: Paul Roussenq' in the last issue of *Organise!*). Sail was responsible for bringing out the North African edition of *Terre Libre*. He attempted to set up an Anarchist Group of Indigenous Algerians, with various appeals in the anarchist press. At the same time he continued to be active with the Union Anarchiste.

Spain

After the Francoist uprising in Spain, Sail joined the Sébastien Faure Century, the French-speaking section of the Durruti Column, the anarchist militia unit in September 1936, becoming its commander. Wounded in the hand during November 1936, he returned to France, after having sent out many letters describing the situation of the Spanish anarchist movement.

After his wound was healed, he took part in many rallies organised by the *Union Anarchiste* on Spain. Immediately after this tour, he participated at a meeting organised by revolutionaries in Paris to protest against the banning of the *Étoile Nord Africaine* edited by Messali Hadj and against the repression of demonstrations in Tunisia, which had resulted in 16 dead. Again arrested for "provocation of the military" he was condemned to 18 months in prison in December 1938.

At the start of the Second World War, he was arrested again and put in the concentration camp at Riom. His large library was broken up after a raid. He escaped from there, forged false papers and went underground during the Occupation.

From 1944 he worked with others for the reconstruction of the anarchist movement. With the Liberation he set up the Aulnay-sous-bois group again, and tried to reform the Committees of Algerian Anarchists. In *Le Libertaire*, weekly paper of the *Fédération Anarchiste*, he wrote a column on the situation in Algeria. He produced a series of articles on the "Calvary of the Indigenous Algerians".

He died in April 1953. Georges Fontenis delivered an address in his honour in the name of the anarchist movement at his funeral on 30 April 1953.

Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with , management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

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Revolutionary portraits

We continue our series Revolutionary Portraits *on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.*

Carl Einstein

Carl Einstein was born in 1885 at Neuwid in the Rhineland, Germany on 26 April. He was a nephew of Albert Einstein.

After having been an apprentice in a bank, whilst taking art history courses, he became a critic of art and literature. In 1917, he participated in the soldiers' councils set up within the German army in Brussels. Returning to Berlin, he was hunted by the police for activity as a member of the Spartakists.

Loosely associated with the radical art movement, he then edited a political and artistic review with Georg Grosz, *Der Blutige Ernst* (*In Bloody Earnest*). He became closely associated with Franz Pfemfert and his review *Die Aktion* which dealt with both revolutionary ideas in politics and art. After having realised one of his dreams, to live in Paris, he founded with Georges Bataille and Leris, the review *Documents*, which appeared between 1929 and 1930.

He wrote articles on painters like Picasso, Braque, Leger and in-depth studies of African art. When the Spanish Revolution broke out, Carl joined the German-language group of the Durruti Column, the Erich Muhsam Century. Muhsam, a well-known anarchist, had been horribly murdered in the Nazi concentration camps, and this may well have influenced Einstein's later actions. He was wounded in combat. He delivered a funeral address at Durruti's funeral, which was also broadcast over the radio.

The collapse of the Republic meant his fleeing to France and his internment at the Gurs concentration camp. Conditions here were terrible. In 1940 Germany invaded France. Unable to escape to America as he wished, he wrote to his friend the art critic Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler: "If the Gestapo are on my trail I will drown myself." He did this on 5 July 1940.

On his memorial plaque, which Kahnweiler helped put up you can read Carl Einstein's words on the Durruti Column: "Where the Column advances, they collectivise. The land is given to the community, the agricultural proletarians, slaves of caciques that they were, change into free men. One passes from agrarian feudalism to free communism."

Sail Mohamed

Sail Mohamed, Ameriane ben Amerzaine was born on 14 October 1894 at Tarberit-Beni-Ouglis in the Berber region of Kabylie, Algeria.

Like many Algerians, he received little schooling. A driver-mechanic by trade, all his life he thirsted for culture and took great pains to educate himself. From a Moslem Berber background, he became a convinced atheist. During the First World War he was interned for insubordination and then desertion from the French Army. His sympathies for anarchism were already developing.

At the end of the War, with the rebuilding of the anarchist movement, he joined the organisation Union Anarchiste (UA). In 1923, with his friend Sliman Kiouane, a singer, he founded the Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Algerians. In his first articles he denounced the poverty of the colonised people and colonial exploitation.He became an expert on the North African situation. He organised meetings with the anarchist groups of the 17th arrondissement of Paris on the exploitation of North Africans, which were delivered in both Arab and French. Sail set up an anarchist group in Aulnay-sous-bois and became one of its most effective activists. In 1929, he became secretary of a new committee: the Defence Committee of Algerians against the Centenary Provocation (France was preparing to celebrate the centenary of the conquest of Algeria on 5 July 1830). All the tendencies of the anarchist movement, the UA, the anarcho-syndicalist union the *Confédération Générale du Travail syndicaliste-révolutionnaire* (CGT-SR) and the *Association de Fédéralistes anarchistes* denounced "Murderous colonialism, bloody masquerade". They put forward the statement "Civilisation? Progress? We say, Murder!" Following this, Sail joined the CGT-SR, in which he created the Section of Indigenous Algerians. The following year, with the Colonial Exhibition at Paris, the anarchist movement restarted its campaign against colonialism. Sail was in the forefront of this struggle.

Social awakening

In January 1932, he became the

Continued on page 26

T/SOR/16/27

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ISSUE Summer 58

MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF) and the Anarchist Federation Ireland. *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* three times a year. To meet this target we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first.

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in late Oct 2002.

All contributions for *Organise!* should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk.

The last issue was incorrectly numbered as 58, it should have been 57. The editors responsible have been roundly criticised, taken out and shot! Hence this issue is numbered summer 58.

Issue 57 contained an article "Revolution on the Net" which provided addresses for a number of pamphlets produced by the group Solidarity. Some of these web addresses no longer work. Manchester AF is in the process of copying as many of these texts as possible onto its web site. Although dated, they make a good read. We hope you enjoy them.

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Organise! back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

Issue 19: The Poll Tax Rebellion
Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise
Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics
Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin; Syndicalism
Issue 48: French unemployed; Haile Selassie; Revolutionary unions?
Issue 50: GM Foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland – the 'peace' process.
Issue 51: War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor
Issue 52: Mass direct action; East Timor; Youth resistance to the Nazis; Workplace notes
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Issue 56: Anti-capitalism; Riots in Oldham; Anarchist culture
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Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything, plus whatever else we can find lying around.

We have also inherited copies of *The Second Best of Subversion*, with articles from the now-defunct paper, *Subversion*. They are free from our Manchester address.

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Argentina: *What next?*

Growing resistance

In the last issue of Organise!, we examined the historical development of Peronist ideology and the forms through which historic class discontent had been recuperated, and made a few suggestions as to the path that the modern movement would have to take to avoid being similarly diverted. In this article we take a closer look at some of the actual events of recent months in light of this, particularly the growth of the popular assemblies and the 'movement of the unemployed'. We will also look at what possibilities exist for class-based revolutionary action, and what dangers this movement may face.

The months following the tumultuous events of December 2001 have seen a deepening and broadening of the movement that brought down the governments of five prime ministers in three weeks. A few examples have been the growth of the popular assemblies and the continued militancy of the *piqueteros* (picketers) – there have also been factory occupations (Brukman, Zanon) and strikes at the privatised oil refineries (Chubut, Santa Fe etc), whilst the 'pots and pans' protests (*cacerolazo*) have continued unabated. The protests have spread throughout the country with the working classes of Rosario and Cordoba being particularly active and radical, the latter going so far as to burn down the town hall.

It's clear that, irrespective of the media's representation of a united Argentina, pulling together for the good of the country, the social tensions that brought about December's eruption have not disappeared, and that, if anything, they have deepened. People are preparing for the state's new assault, which has to come. Two of the most interesting aspects of this have been the birth and spread of the popular assemblies and the activities of the *piqueteros*, and the possibilities for link-ups between the two.

Rise of the popular assemblies

The popular assemblies grew directly out of the December protests, and were originally concerned with the Government's restrictions on withdrawals from private bank accounts – which in itself hints at their class composition. They were generally attended by people who were officially employed – whether by the state, the newly-privatised utilities or family businesses – as opposed to the 60% of the population that is employed in the black market or precarious casual labour. They were further distinguished by being drawn largely from the city areas of Buenos Aires rather than the surrounding suburbs and shanty towns (*Villas de La Miseria*) where the *piqueteros* live.

As the crisis developed, more and more of these assemblies sprung up, 20 were formed in the two weeks following the resignation of President De la Rua, and today there are more than 50, covering almost every area of Buenos Aires. The average attendance is around 3,000 *autoconvocados* (self-convened) which demonstrates the grass roots interest in political activity away from the dead hand of leftist representation.

Photo from www.indymedia.org

Recallable delegates from the popular assemblies are also sent to *interbarrials* (inter-neighbourhood bodies), which operate as a co-ordinating centre. Essential local services, such as water and electricity supplies are now being taken care of by many assemblies, as the Government is not up to the task – a lesson which the assemblies have picked up very quickly, as they continue to take back control over more and more areas of their communities' functioning. A number of neighbourhood initiatives have also been established – community kitchens and cafes, credit unions, barter clubs etc. These are helping to build up a strong feeling of social solidarity, and

Photo from www.indymedia.org

destroying the idea that only Government is capable of organising society.

The speed of advance of the idea of neighbourhood assemblies is actually drawing strength from their more middle-class composition – these people are the ones who voted for the Governments of the IMF in the belief that it would bring stability, only to find themselves proletarianised.

Politicians are no longer safe to be seen in public

They are looking to make a clean break with parties, politicians and institutional politics. So much so, in fact, that politicians are no longer safe to be seen in public – they are chased from their favourite restaurants and spat at in middle-class areas by people who would previously have voted for them. This rejection is reflected in the popular assemblies, which have moved on from concern over personal savings to wider questioning of the way society is run as a whole.

Mobilisation among the working class

The unemployed movement is a much more working-class phenomenon and has been around for a number of years. The movement is made up of those who have been laid off from formerly state-owned companies, and those who operate in the black economy and who are not guaranteed a wage – it is also noticeably more even in terms of gender representation than the assemblies. Though it draws the majority of its supporters from the areas surrounding Buenos Aires, it is emphatically not a lumpen or rural movement. Many of its members worked in factories, auto-plants or oil refineries for years before the drastic layoffs of the last decades, and have long experience of fighting against capital.

The main activity of the unemployed is called 'picketing' (hence, *piqueteros*) – but it covers a much broader area than is traditionally understood by 'picketing'. The most popular form of picketing is the closing down of main highways or transport networks in order to stop the circulation of commodities. They understand they have no power in the production process, but that capital must complete its circuit if valorisation is to take place, and so they attempt to block the part of that circuit they have access to. (And thereby demonstrate a much firmer grasp of how capital functions than those 'Marxists' who condemn them as powerless lumpens.)

"In August 2001, a nationwide mobilisation of highly-organised unemployed groups, numbering over 100,000 people, shut down over 300 highways in Argentina, paralysing the economy, including the previously invulnerable financial sector." (*The Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina* – Monthly Review, January 2002)

Clearly, this is a confrontational and militant tactic, and large-scale battles often break out, but it is well suited to the achievement of immediate aims. A further appealing approach used by the *piqueteros* is the refusal of delegation when dealing with capital – if they are blocking a highway for a specific demand, rather than respond to the Government's or businesses' summons to come into Buenos Aires to discuss the matter, they make the responsible party come to them. All discussion is carried on in front of and by the unemployed themselves, which minimises the risk of buying off of leaders and puts the bosses at a distinct disadvantage. Unlike the popular assemblies, the 'unemployed movement' is not a recent invention. It has been in existence since the early to mid '90s, and pioneered the use of assemblies, holding two national conferences in 2001, and regular mass assemblies. It also part of the wider movement and concerns itself with other struggles – members recently blocked transports in and out of oil refineries in Chubut, Neuquen, Chaco and Salta in support of striking workers.

Asambleas and *movemientos*

Both movements have important limitations though – most obviously in their relation to the state – and there is a definite tension between the two, which could possibly be a future source of Government-inspired conflict. The contradictory nature of the assemblies is highlighted by their addressing of demands to the state, rather than relying on their own autonomous collective power to take what they want – they are, in fact (for now, at least), based on the acceptance of the state as the ultimate legitimate authority. A participant in the Almagro neighbourhood assembly argues that, "When a married couple decides to separate, that doesn't mean that they won't go on to marry someone else. This is the same thing: we don't want these politicians. We want a change."

But the same assembly can also publish a declaration stating that: "We have no expectations of the new Government coming out of this crisis, because these people governed the country until a couple of years ago and govern today most of the provinces, implementing the same economic and social policy which the people have repudiated a few days ago. That is why we repudiate both *peronismo* and *radicalismo* and all their accomplices..."

"[...] The state of assembly and mobilisation [is] the only way to guarantee our right as workers, neighbours and Argentinians [...] We call all the neighbourhoods of the Capital to create and take part in all the assemblies and forms of organisation set up by their neighbours and organisations. And we call to create connection commissions (*comisiones de enlace*) with the assemblies already formed or about to be formed." (Declaration of the Popular Assembly of Almagro, Buenos Aires. "The People Say Enough: Let us have Politics through Popular Assemblies"). This contradiction is also demonstrated by the support given for forming 'Workers' Defence' units, under the control of the assemblies, whilst also voting for a constituent assembly, which could only serve to direct anger back into limited and representative forms.

Liberals and reformists

This reformist tendency within the assemblies is bolstered by the actions of the left, particularly Workers' Power (PO), Workers' Socialist Movement (MST) and the Union of Argentinian Workers (CTA). These groups have attempted to use the assemblies for their own reformist and statist demands. Typically, they will try to get onto executive committees and then push for a motion proposing nationalisation of various industries (sound familiar?), or other measures that divert the struggle into legalistic and therefore easily-recuperable avenues. This has not gone unnoticed by the assembly members, who have acted to remove these parasites – the Workers' Democracy group was expelled from the national assembly of workers in February, and moves are afoot in other places to minimise the influence of the parties. What is needed though is a clear and unambiguous removal of these reactionary currents, which act as a drag-anchor on the autonomous movement of the working class, from the centre of the struggle – that means taking them off executive committees or from responsible positions.

On the net

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You can also E-mail us at:

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The reformist tendency within the assemblies is bolstered by the actions of the left

This liberal/democratic tendency is further encouraged by the adoption of parliamentary terms and conventions, with 'parties' forming and official positions being encouraged. The bourgeoisie has quickly seen the potential in this and has developed courses on 'citizens' power' which teach people the correct and democratic way to make institutional changes. This has led to the formation of a professional, middle-class strata which holds many of the key positions within the assemblies. Currently, the large numbers involved make it hard for this group to exercise any real control, but the potential remains, especially if numbers attending drop off over the coming months. Further evidence of this possibility is provided by the fact that the work of the executive committees is broadcast on local radio for all of 15 minutes a week! Not exactly going out of their way to involve other people.

The movements against reform

One dynamic that is militating against this attempted recuperation is the drawing in of the *piqueteros* into the assembly movement. Presently, the *piqueteros* send delegates to the *interbarrias*, without fully participating themselves, as they have their own pre-existing general assemblies in the *barrios*. A tension exists between the two, as the *piqueteros* are suspicious that the popular assemblies are using them as muscle in their plans to apply pressure to the Government, in much the same way that Peron used the might of the organised working class to gain control of the state apparatus. They are also dismissive of some of the rather half-hearted actions the popular assemblies endorse – specifically of the city road blocks that only shut down one main street, whilst allowing sides streets to be used, thereby sabotaging the protest by minimising disturbance

Photo from www.indymedia.org

to business. This suspicion is only enhanced by all the above factors.

The 'unemployed movement' also contains its own contradictions. Like that of the popular assemblies, its attitude towards the state presupposes its legitimacy. Despite the militant nature of their tactics, the content is not that radical – state employment schemes, better social security provisions, food allowances, cheaper utility bills, etc. These demands are constantly being expanded, however, and are now complimented by support for the freeing of hundreds of jailed unemployed workers, as well as public investments in water, paved roads, and health facilities.

Room exists for a radicalisation of their activities into questioning capitalism itself. This is helped by the fact that the movement is very careful to retain its autonomy from state or leftist structures. The whole dynamic of their development has been consistently to push their demands to a higher level. James Petras notes that, "The success of the unemployed movement in Argentina today is due to the fact that it learned from experience to avoid the pitfalls of the past by organising independently within the *barrios*, autonomously from the trade union bureaucracy, electoral parties, and state apparatus." (*The Unemployed Workers' Movement in Argentina* – Monthly Review, January 2002)

Reform or revolution?

The possible radicalising effect of a large-scale influx of *piqueteros* will be one of the key things that determine how events will pan out in the coming months. The popular assemblies need the militant, direct action of the unemployed movement to push them beyond the current half-way house of appealing to the state, whilst demonstrating in their practical activities that they have no need of it. Whilst the *piqueteros* can learn from the direct democracy practised in the assemblies and the value of territorial organising. The joint action of the two would only help to advance the struggle to a new level.

The limitations and contradictions sketched out above are not set in stone though – the dynamic of working-class self-activity logically leads to challenging these obstacles. As people become conscious of their own strength and power they gain in confidence and push beyond their original intentions, and the movement gains further momentum, leading to a heightened level of struggle. In just a few months, the situation has developed from a localised dispute about personal savings to a generalised uprising, that is the dynamic of this struggle. To follow it through to its conclusion could mean only one thing – revolution.

Another reason to be optimistic is that the methods used to recuperate past class struggles in Argentina (see the last *Organise!*), and which were based on large-scale welfare programmes, co-option of unions into a corporatist framework and the whole 'social-contract'/ Keynesian model are now definitively gone and will not be making a comeback any time soon. This has led to a more open and unmediated struggle taking place. The ability of the state to 'pacify' key sections of the working class through rising real wages, welfare provisions, progressive taxation etc has disappeared, and has been replaced by attacks upon the very things that had guaranteed the social peace in the past. The state is trapped in a very difficult situation – it recognises the need to impose social spending cuts, but also recognises that if it does implement these cuts, it's likely to lead to even larger assaults on itself.

A return to offensive struggle may be on the cards

What the recent events have also made clear is that the neo-liberal project itself is coming under increasing pressure, both from the working class and from inside certain sectors of the ruling class (the IMF's refusal to grant new loans during the December crisis). If the post-war social consensus has been destroyed by neo-liberalism, then neo-liberalism is beginning to show signs that it also cannot guarantee stable conditions for capital accumulation – Argentina may be the first step in a cycle of struggle based upon recognising these new conditions, rather than the essentially defensive battles that the last decades have shown. A return to offensive struggle may be on the cards.

However events turn out, the past few months have shown that the working class has not disappeared and remains capable of collectively fighting for its interests against both the state and the left-wing of capitalism. The rapid spread of bottom-up organising, relying on the activity of the working class itself, combined with the refusal to accept representation or mediation can only bolster the anarchist case for people to run their own lives free of any outside imposition of authority.

Resistance!

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of *Resistance* means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged hard work.

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AF Ireland produce their own regular newssheet, *Resistance Ireland*. It is available from their address: Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505 Belfast, BT12 6BQ. Phone: 07951 079719.

A critical look at the pagan movement:

What can magic do for anarchism?

Why has paganism become so popular?

Despite an increase in the number of people interested and affected by anarchist ideas, the actual growth of membership in organisations and activist groups has been relatively small. On the other hand, organisations and movements that could be defined as religious or spiritual have seen an enormous upsurge in the past decades. Though they might seem very different, some examples of such movements are Muslim and Christian fundamentalism and paganism.

This article will focus on the pagan movement. I will try to explain why paganism has become so popular and then discuss to what extent paganism could have a role to play, along with anarchism, in the creation of a new society.

It is difficult to know how many pagans there are in Britain. The Pagan Federation claims 3,000 members and also estimates that there are between 100,000 and 200,000 practising pagans. These estimates are based on attendance at various festivals. The reason it is so difficult to know numbers is that there are a variety of different groups and practices that come under this umbrella term. In addition, many people may see themselves as pagan, but would not join an organisation; they will just hold a set of beliefs and maybe carry out their own individual practices.

What is paganism?

It is often argued that paganism can trace its origins back to pre-Christian times. It is thought to be the religion practised by people who had an intimate relationship to the land and its seasons. However, it is unclear exactly how linked modern paganism is to the past.

Some of the first groups emerged in the US in the '70s and said they were neo-pagans. One of the first groups, Church of all Worlds, took its name from a religious group in a science fiction book by Robert Heinlein. In Britain, the movement is thought to have its origins in a witchcraft coven founded by Gerald Gardner back in the '50s. He claimed to have found evidence of a coven that could trace its origins back to the witch-hunt days of early modern Europe. Another influence was Robert Graves' book on the White Goddess.

Whatever the actual links to the past, modern paganism is essentially a reconstruction based on what people want to believe. And for most, it doesn't matter whether the new paganism is the same as the old. A good description of paganism comes from Cairril Adaire, the National Co-ordinator of the Pagan Education network in the US: "Paganism is a collection of diverse religions which are nature-centred and rooted in personal experience. While some pagan religions provide training structures,

the movement as a whole has no hierarchy, no holy book, no one, right, true authority. Pagan religions encourage the individual to develop her own relationship with Divinity, however she views it. And most intriguing to me, you could be an atheist pagan!" Some of the different pagan traditions include wicca (or witchcraft), druidism, shamanism and chaos magic. Most share some common beliefs and practices and see nature as divine in some way.

Beliefs: The divine is female, too

One of the main beliefs common to pagans is that divinity has both a male and female aspect. In religions such as wicca, the Goddess is usually the main focus of worship. Pagans will also see other gods and goddesses, associated with different aspects of nature or the human condition. Pagans would argue that a belief in these spiritual beings is not the same as in other religions. The divine is not outside and above the world, but exists in everything, including humans. It's difficult to say whether people actually believe that these beings exist or whether they are just symbols that people use.

Starhawk, a well-known American witch, talks of using symbols as a way of visualising things so that we can experience them. If we can name something, we can integrate it into our consciousness. So, for example, someone may go on a shamanic journey and meet their spirit helper. They ask the spirit helper a question they are trying to answer in their lives. Now, this could be seen as a journey to the other world that really exists, or it may only be seen as a way of accessing parts of the unconscious self. Similarly, a pagan ritual may invoke the Goddess, but only because this is only a symbol of an aspect of themselves that they want to develop.

Pagans also use a wheel or circle as a symbol and place great emphasis on the marking of the seasonal cycle. By celebrating the solstices and equinoxes, pagans believe they are integrating the natural rhythms into their own lives. It creates a bond with nature which is itself divine. Apart from the belief in the God/Goddess and the sacred nature of the seasonal cycles, there are not many actual pagan beliefs that are held in common. Instead, paganism is very adaptable and individuals will create their own particular beliefs. Even the morality is vague and left to the individual; 'If it doesn't harm, do what you will' is the only rule. It is instead the practice of paganism that seems to bind people together.

Ritual magic

With the popularity of Harry Potter, talk of magic is very much in fashion. But what exactly is it? There's no doubt that pagans have a strong belief in the effectiveness of magic. This can take place one two levels: magic to transform the self and magic to effect some change in the world. Starhawk stresses the use of magic to transform consciousness. The pagan defines magic as being: "the art of changing consciousness at will". The principle of magic is that consciousness has structure. She actually uses science to support a belief in magic in her book *Dreaming the Dark*.

'If it doesn't harm, do what you will'

"Modern physics no longer speaks of separate, discrete atoms of dead matter, but of waves of energy, probabilities, patterns that change as they are observed; it recognises what shamans and witches have always known: that matter and energy are not separate forces, but different forms of the same thing" (p10).

Ritual can therefore be used as a way of changing the structure of consciousness. By using powerful symbols and by going into trance, pagans will try and tap into the movements of energy and change the images in their minds and patterns of behaviour. Power is a key part of magical practices. However, pagans would argue that it is not power-over, but power-within, using the power one has acquired through the ritual and the journey to the 'other world' to channel one's own energies and consciousness in the direction the individual wants to go.

In Chaos magic, the aim of the rituals which involve trance and sometimes spirit possession, is to alter consciousness in order to be liberated from the prison of society. They want to think and act in an unconditioned way. Magic rituals are also used to change something outside in the world. It is common to carry out rituals to summon help for members of the group, such as a healing ritual, or to bring some benefit to someone. For example, a coven in London did a ritual for a local shop owner to help out with business and within two weeks of doing the ritual the business took off! Pagans will argue that magic can be used for both harm and good and that for them it should only be used for good.

The appeal of paganism

There are a number of reasons why paganism has become so popular. Marion Adler, in her book *Drawing Dawn the Moon*, discusses a number of reasons. Firstly, the fact that the Goddess is the key figure in the religion has appealed to many women. The Pagan federation was first organised by women. Wicca amounts to about 40% of practising pagans and is especially popular with women. Covens are usually no more than 13 people and will be led by a couple. So, though there is a priest, it is the priestess that seems to have more status. There are also many all-women covens, especially in the US. With the demise of the women's movement and the drop in political activity, paganism has become a haven for many older feminists but also younger women.

The stress on the sacredness of nature has also struck a chord with many in the environmental movement. There has been a cross-over between environmental activists and pagans. It would be interesting to know how many links there actually are between for example Earth First and the Pagan Federation. Pagans were apparently involved in the struggle against the road over Twyford Down. But even though I don't know any more details, it stands to reason that people who believe so strongly in the value of nature would want to get involved in helping to preserve that nature.

Another important aspect of paganism is the way that it presents an alternative vision of the world and the cosmos that represents freedom and autonomy. Pagans would argue that it does not have any of the negative aspects of religion. Pagans can act as they want because there is not the notion of sin or guilt. They can practice the religion as they want, without having to worry that they have 'got it wrong'. The reasons people give for becoming pagans can be perhaps summed up by this quote from Cairril Adaire: "As a pagan – as a witch – I can be powerful, passionate, intelligent, fun-loving, compassionate, loving and dynamic. My spirituality supports my personality, values and politics. It challenges me to develop continually into a more whole, healthy human being. It also offers a community of like-minded individuals. It answers my questions about the meaning of existence, the importance of justice and the value of change."

Why not anarchism?

So why don't people become anarchists instead? One of the main reasons people have for becoming pagans is the lack of power people have in their everyday lives. This may be one of the main reasons why people become pagans rather than anarchists. Paganism offers the hope that despite living in a society that aims to control and mould every aspect of your life and thoughts, there is a way to escape. By using magic, you can transform yourself and become something different. In addition, it may even be possible to cause change in a small way in the world at large.

Anarchism is a political movement that seeks to bring about a totally new society. This is not an easy task and will not be done for the foreseeable future. Many people who are committed anarchists often despair at the difficulties involved, so it's not surprising that others would want to find something that makes them feel that they are changing something now, even if it is only themselves. In addition, paganism seems to offer much more than politics, as can be seen from the quote above. It can be seen as political, but it also offers a more general perspective on issues to do with the 'meaning of life'.

Give up anarchism, become a pagan?

Despite being able to see the attractions of paganism, I would argue that paganism is not only limited in its vision, but it could actually conflict with the basic principles and practices of anarchism. The problem with paganism is that the focus is too much on the individual. There is nothing wrong with wanting to escape social conditioning and to expand one's consciousness, but if this is all that you do, then it will have little, if any impact on the world. In fact, any one could become a pagan, no matter what their position in society and use the magical practices. So it could be equally of use to the manager who wants to become more powerful and confident as it would be to a worker who wants to become more autonomous in relation to management's attempts to control him/her.

By using magic, you can transform yourself and become something different

If we are going to create a new society, we need to directly challenge and eliminate capitalism and the state. This can only be done by building a powerful movement, based on the working class, which engages in struggles over very concrete issues. Paganism has no intention of doing anything like this. They would not have time in any case, with most of their time taken up with various rituals. There seems no awareness that there are very real material forms of oppression and exploitation. No amount of magic or self-transformation will stop the bombs falling or put food on your table when you have no money.

There is another equally important problem of paganism. Though the stress is supposed to be on power-from-within, I am not convinced that this is always the case. There are many inherent dangers within the belief systems and practices.

Susan Greenwood is an anthropologist with many sympathies to witchcraft and paganism. However, in her research she became very worried about the problem of power relations within covens. Witches journey to the other world in order to tap into the power and knowledge of

Photo from www.indymedia.org

other beings. Those who are seen to have more access to this power and knowledge often have more power within the group. Therefore, she found that in some covens, the priestess used her position of being in a superior position in relation to the otherworld to dominate and psychologically abuse the other members of the coven.

She cites one example where the priestess set up a ritual and wouldn't tell the other members what it would entail. Once it was underway and she had 'summoned the Goddess', she asked the priest to go around to all the members of the group with a knife, asking them who would suffer pain for the Goddess. This was a way of testing individuals' willingness to obey her, under the guise of saying it's to obey the Goddess. This might not be typical of the practice of covens, but the basic structure of a coven, dominated by a priestess and priest, does not encourage equality. Also, the use of the 'otherworld' to enhance your personal status and position in this world, seems no different than what happens in other religions. I do not see how the emphasis on magic and power can help us to create a society where we have destroyed power. Even if pagan groupings are less hierarchically-structured, there is still the problem of 'tyranny of structurelessness' where certain individuals dominate because of their personality and experience. This critique of power relations within paganism does not mean that anarchist groups are free from these issues. In some ways, there are similar problems. For example, a knowledge of anarchist theory or super-activism can be the source of individual power within a group. But at least in anarchism there is no outside source of power.

Common ground?

Paganism may have some serious flaws that make it no substitute for anarchism if the goal is to create a new society. However, this does not mean that it is impossible to be an anarchist and a pagan. As mentioned above, anarchism is a political movement and though it says that it is important for individuals to change, it does not offer any ideas on how this should be done concretely, except 'through struggle'.

Anarchism may try and create new forms of organisation but there is little consideration of how we should try and change as individuals, though these issues were addressed by anarchists historically. Also, anarchism has nothing to say about the general question of the meaning of life. Many anarchists will say there is no meaning nor anything apart from this world. However, whether they admit it or not, I'm sure there are many who do ponder some of the 'bigger questions' such as the origin of the universe and what it all means. There does seem to be a need amongst many people in general to have some sort of 'spirituality' or way of dealing with the unknown. I don't really see it a problem for the anarchist movement if people do want to involve themselves with such issues. The main point is whether or not their beliefs cause them to believe in some external authority, whether it be a God or the Goddess. It would not be at all in tune with anarchism if people presented a view on something because they said their spirit helper had told them to! Whatever the ultimate meaning of the cosmos, as far as we are know, there is only us. We have only ourselves to rely on in terms of creating who we are, how we want to live and the meaning of human existence.

In addition, there are some beliefs within paganism that are compatible with anarchism. We agree that the current society is unacceptable and that we should create a society that is non-hierarchical, non-patriarchal and in harmony with the environment. And you never know, maybe a magic ritual might give the movement just that boost that we need!

On the other hand, paganism can lead to mystification of the world and a misunderstanding of what is wrong and why, the maintenance of relations of power and a very time-consuming diversion from building a movement that can truly change the world.

ACE

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An attack on one is an attack on all?

Editors' note:
This text was distributed at a recent demonstration in London by people who have been meeting under the banner 'No War But The Class War'.

If there is one issue that is taxing the minds of states worldwide, it is the question of asylum seekers and refugees. The unprecedented levels of movement of people from Africa, Asia and the Middle East into the economically advanced western countries has lead to intense debate between those modernising sectors of the ruling class that see the benefits of this development, but who fear the long-term consequences and the traditional small-minded nationalists who wish to see 'their' countries remain pure, but still want to take advantage of the ultra-cheap labour that undocumented workers provide. Millions of words have been written in the capitalist press, and the liberal left has energetically debated the matter at their dinner parties – how to take advantage of people whilst appearing to treat them fairly and in a manner consistent with the mythology of bourgeois democracy.

The various approaches that individual states and blocs have come up with are the practical expression of the compromise that the competing tendencies have settled on. In short, a plan is being put in place to regularise the movements of people in order to provide a reserve of cheap labour power, which is to be put at the service of capital without any of the social costs that 'legitimate' workers expect as a right (health care, pensions, minimum wage etc). The first step of this plan entails gaining control of the actual points of entry (Channel tunnel, etc), or points of departure (refugee camps, etc) then establishing formal procedures for processing the refugees as 'potential workers'. This will be a long, drawn-out process and the contours of it are only just emerging, but the intention to make use of these developments is clear. 'Fortress Europe' is not an attempt to stop immigration, but to turn it to capitalism's benefit.

This process differs from past immigration control plans in that it is not dealing with a legal movement of people who already have ties with the 'host' country through past colonial relations and who are 'invited' in to work, instead it is facing mass illegal entry from people who've been displaced by wars or disasters caused by capital, and who often have no tie to their final destination.

Sicily

The recent events in Sicily, where thousands of immigrants have been arriving on boats, highlights this – the majority of them have originated from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka or the Kurdish areas of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Similarly, many south east Asians and Africans are trying to get to North Africa to cross the Mediterranean to Europe. These desperate actions often end in tragedy – hundreds of people are swept away every year trying to swim or raft across the Straits of Gibraltar between Morocco and Spain; thousands drown in the Mediterranean when their rotten boats sink (as recently happened just off Italy with over 50 dead); 58 Chinese people were found suffocated to death at Dover, and a smaller number at Dublin docks; 350 Iraqis drowned off the coast of Indonesia, whilst trying to reach Australia in October 2001, and every day individuals are electrocuted or hit by trains whilst trying to cross through the Channel Tunnel from the Red Cross camp at Sangatte in France. The sheer recklessness of these actions speaks volumes about the conditions they are trying to escape.

The reaction of the EU (comparable changes have occurred elsewhere) has

been to implement a whole raft of measures – more restrictive visa provisions, carrier sanctions (fining individual hauliers or companies who 'allow' people to enter in their vehicles), pre-inspection at points of departure, detention of those who do manage to enter in harsh and unwelcoming conditions, return of undocumented people to their point of departure (which carries an added threat as it puts the refugee in the position of possibly being sent back branded as a failed applicant for asylum, and therefore a dissident), dumping of people in border camps.

Immigration's Big Brother

The key to the EU's plan is the Schengen Information system (SIS), "a technical deportation device" that carries information on nearly 10 million people and which is open to all member states – the overwhelming majority of data entered is on immigrants and those who are suspected of planning to overstay visas etc – this allows the police in any EU state to effectively carry out 'sus' stop and searches on any one they suspect may be on the database, which amounts to practically a Europe-wide pass law, such as operated in apartheid South Africa. This is demonstrated by the fact that: "Out of the 65 million SIS inquiries made by German authorities, 52% were requested by frontier officials and mobile patrols near the border. The remaining 47.5% of requests were made by police in the inland, therefore related to non-suspect-related stop and search operations that were carried out in inner cities, on country roads and in trains, and that are first and foremost directed against migrants." (http://noborder.org/item_archive.php?id=80)

What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

Immigrant labour is always welcomed by the bosses

All these new measures are being introduced despite the fact that 75% of all movement is still between poor, non-western countries – these are designed as controlling measures for those who are eventually allowed to enter the EU to work. The new strategy doesn't entail the permanent settlement of these people, rather it hopes to make use of their labour then return them to their point of departure in order to be taken up again by some other corporation. This is handy because it means the worker will be contributing to the tax coffers of different countries (as well as helping the local capitalisms) but will be entitled to social security in none. (Incidentally, SIS2 is in the pipeline and will contain data on 'politicals', a clear step towards the criminalisation of dissent – see also reporting on 'Europol' in Statewatch. The 'noborders' 2002 camp is to be held in June at the Strasburg home of SIS.)

A hidden underclass

All this might give the impression that the EU and European capital is seeking to put a stop to illegal immigration, but this is far from the truth. The fact is that (illegal) immigration is a key plank of the attack on the living standards of the working classes, and is a handy weapon in the hands of the bosses in their battle to impose flexibilisation and the acceptance of the loss of previously guaranteed standards and rights (health provisions, pensions etc) – a certain amount of illegal immigration is part of the plan – it helps to maintain false divisions in the working class, and in the future could possibly be used to foster legal worker/temporary new 'legal' worker/illegal worker job competition, benefiting no one but the bosses.

Immigrant labour, especially undocumented or illegal, is always welcomed by the bosses. The precarious nature of the immigrant's conditions, and the responsibilities they often have to family in their countries of origin, means that they are compelled to accept conditions that a 'legitimate' worker would not. They can be made to work harder, for longer, at lower rates and in worse conditions (with little or no guarantee of finally seeing their wages) than a worker who is protected by minimum wage legislation, or maximum working time rights.

This clearly benefits the capitalist as they have to pay less in production costs, but it also contributes to internal divisions in the working class with immigrants being portrayed as bringing down the level of wages through their 'willingness' to work in such appalling conditions. This is not a new tactic and has been around since the dawn of capitalism, but what is different about this particular use of it is that it is being applied on a (nearly) continent-wide basis, by a supra-national body which effectively demonstrates that this is a policy that they have decided will become permanent over the coming decades. It is a key part of the ongoing attempt by capital to restructure itself.

The profits secured from this precarious labour is being redirected into updating technology and manufacturing stock for the 'legitimate' sector, which in turn is used to try and force greater productivity and output from the legal workers, through new surveillance techniques and new forms of workplace organisation (just-in-time, toyotism) that have been made possible through the exploitation of illegal workers. This absolutely fundamental connection between the two sections of the working class is easily obscured, yet it is the key to understanding the shared conditions of these two sections of the working class – the fact that they are both exploited by capitalism, and that the recognition of this bond is a step in the direction of overcoming these conditions by overthrowing capitalism itself.

This practical resistance is happening already: the recent attempts to storm Woomera detention centre in Australia, which led to a mass breakout with an unknown number still on the run; the hunger strikes at Dungavel in Scotland; the burning of Yarls Wood at the cost of £38 million; the continual demonstrations in solidarity with refugees in Italian cities, usually numbering in the tens of thousands; the Curtin (remote northern Western Australia) detainees who have been in a constant state of rebellion for the last few months; and not to forget the practical critique of capital and its borders that the refugees have made by simply ignoring them. The struggle is bound to be a long one, and will take on many different forms, but we surely must try and at least match the levels of militancy and fiercely-determined resistance that those who are currently incarcerated have shown. The supra-national bodies have shown how they're willing to make this struggle a central part of their plans for the foreseeable future – we must accord it the same importance or condemn ourselves to irrelevance.

Peace? *What peace?*

The recent murder of Catholic postal worker, Daniel McColgan, in north Belfast, led to one of those rare moments in the history of Northern Ireland – a public display of solidarity against the paramilitary intrusion, usually fatal, into the lives of ordinary people here.

The large-scale protests which brought tens of thousands out onto the streets of Belfast, Derry and Newry are a clear signal to the paramilitaries that enough is enough, and that what the vast majority of people desire now is peace – a peace in which society here can hope to attain the levels of 'normality' that appear to exist in societies elsewhere.

Daniel McColgan was someone in a uniform doing his job, but he was also a Catholic doing his job in Rathcoole, a Protestant stronghold, and for this reason he was gunned down. That most people come into contact with postal workers every day (one of the few strangers we don't mind opening the door to in our atomised society) perhaps helped in marking the difference between his death and the countless numbers of other sectarian murders that have occurred throughout the last 30 years. Perhaps we all thought we knew him. Perhaps his death, which was part of a series of assaults on other members of the working class whose job is to serve the community (ambulance and public transport workers have also come under attack), was enough to push people here beyond their already high powers of endurance. But the fact that thousands of Catholics and Protestants were irate enough to come together and voice their anger publicly is a positive sign, and gives hope for the future – but it is only the first step.

Everyone wants peace in Northern Ireland, but what kind of peace does everyone want? Politicians in Stormont, on the odd day in the week they bother to meet, want peace too. Their idea of peace, however, is the peace that renders possible the long-term economic and political interests of Britain, and its commander in chief, the US. For them, peace represents the opportunity to open up Northern Ireland to multi-national investment, and the accompanying third-world style exploitation of our workforce. Stormont itself will not lead to the end of the kind of sectarianism that culminated in the death of Daniel McColgan. It has, and will, merely institutionalise the sectarian divide that continues to be the dominant feature across the social landscape of the north.

At the moment, North Belfast is testament to the lingering hatred that the so-called 'peace process' was meant to stamp out. The recent upsurge in violence there is seen by many as an anachronism, a blip in the normalisation process. This view, however, ignores the reality that north Belfast has been one of the most impoverished and neglected areas of Ireland, north and south, for decades and, as a result, a hotspot for the recruiting agents of republicanism and loyalism. With the UDA (Ulster Defence Association) no longer on ceasefire, and with their political wing, the UDP (Ulster Democratic Party) recently disbanded, the stakes have been raised in this particular enclave of Belfast (117 pipe bomb attacks on

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.
The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including pGp. If anybody you know in Britain speaks Serbo-Croat or if you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood, then why not send them copies?
German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Catholic homes in 2001) where violence orchestrated by the UDA etc, is being met by the less organised forces of hardcore republican youth.

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

Black Flag. £1.50 per issue/£6 sub. BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

SchNEWS. Weekly direct action news-sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX.

Direct Action, anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation.£1.50 per issue/£5 subs. PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW.

Earth First! Action Update, monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12-issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally-related issues, including news and discussion on the anti-capitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet Radical Books, 1621 Fleet St, Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O, Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, link to them through our website.

Sinn Fein and co have too much to lose by taking the bait, and being drawn out of the peace process which has recently witnessed Gerry Adams, erstwhile 'socialist', being feted by the WEF in New York, rather than attend a Bloody Sunday commemoration rally in Derry. Likewise, other mainstream politicians like the DUP's Nigel Dodds, are too fearful of losing potential votes in a contentious Belfast seat that could swing republican at the next election. The UDA, who carried out McColgan's murder, need drug turf and thus drug money to finance future 'military' operations. They need to continue to fuel the fear of Catholic penetration of Protestant areas in order to maximise more hatred, which they in turn can channel for their own ends.

So what does the future have in store for Northern Ireland? The hawks in the UDA will continue their campaign of intimidation and violence in order to destabilise the 'peace process' which they feel has failed them, and hope that the IRA slips up over demilitarisation – a prospect which is unlikely, given the financial windfall that capitalists can expect with prolonged peace. As small-time entrepreneurs themselves, the UDA is guilty of a marked naivety if they think anything they can do will rock the boat now. That said, perhaps they will be content with the ghettoisation of various interface and poor loyalist areas in which they can conduct their business, and like their counterparts in the IRA, renounce, if they haven't already, their version of the phoney concept of 'national liberation', which is as implausible as the idea of national economic independence given the nature of the world today.

So, the demonstrations against the murder of Daniel McColgan, positive as they were, must be followed by the growth of a culture of resistance which sees the communities here united again, but this time united in the daily struggle of life under capitalism, united in their realisation that they should no longer be manipulated as two rival sets of exploited labour, divided by religion and nationalism, and underpinned by a bogus cultural identification of what differentiates something or someone British, from something or someone Irish. It is up to anarchists to involve themselves in this process, to build the foundation for class struggle, and destroy the capitalist stranglehold over us.

The Anarchist Federation Ireland set up in Ireland in autumn 2001. Since then AFI has been actively involved in anti-war, pro-choice and anti-Sellafield activism. We also participate in the series of grassroots gatherings, the aim of which are to build up a broad-based libertarian movement in Ireland. We already have contacts with anarchists in Dundalk, Derry, Belfast, Dublin, Sligo, Kildare and Cork and have members both north and south of the border.

To find out more about the Anarchist Federation Ireland, email us at ireaf@yahoo.ie – Or go to our website at www.afireland@cjb.net

Stormy Petrel pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti. Writings from the much-misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence. An important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for *revolution* to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from AF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

Inside the Yellow *House*

A libertarian approach to disaffected youth in Liverpool

Curfew orders on disaffected youth? A new generation of Kray Twins? 'Feral' children roaming the streets? And who but some right-wing hack could coin such a phrase to describe fellow human beings? Listening to the media, anyone could be forgiven for thinking that all hope has been abandoned and working-class youth are the bane of cosy, middle England.

Nothing could be further from the truth and there are things going on in Liverpool that give the lie to the lurid bourgeois accusations of lawless young desperadoes hanging around every street corner just waiting to relieve passers-by of their credit cards, Rolexes, jewellery and mobiles.

It's undoubtedly true that capitalism has the power to create monsters in every community. The remarkable thing is that so few of us take this road despite the enormous, coercive pressures of consumer-driven society breeding a crude selfishness in practically every one of our actions, from the earliest stages of infancy. They won't admit it, but avarice is a condition alien to the huge majority of humankind the world over and especially so in young people. Young people possess a fondness for each other unparalleled in other groups, they love working hard and having fun together with their peers. Caring, sharing, harmonising and fostering a natural empathy are strongly rooted in the young. The Yellow House theatre group is living proof of that.

Very personal visions

Yellow House is a unique youth organisation created and set up in the mid-80s by a local man with vision and an undaunted faith in Liverpool's working-class youth – George McKane. Yellow House is named after Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh's house in Arles, where the door was always kept open. For Yellow House, read open house – open specifically to working-class kids.

George feels instinctively that art is not the prerogative or product of the middle and upper-classes but could be more passionately expressed and appreciated by the working class themselves – art that is an expression of their daily experiences of hardship and the emotions that scraping a living from the crumbs from the capitalist's table create. "For me, daily life is the act, the common reality, the domain of falsehood and convention. The purpose of theatre should not be to describe life but to be a space where a life process takes place. Theatre should be where the 'actors and the audience' make mutual contact, leading to the discovery of the fullness of human nature."

The Yellow House is principally a theatre group open to all young people of Liverpool regardless of background, race or financial status. George believes passionately that the talent and the urge to be creative that is part of every human life does not depend on wealth or social connection for development. The theory behind this Theatre of Exposure is quite simple: "We are teaching the young people not to act, but to be themselves in a given situation. We are training – asking –

the young people to take off their masks and to be themselves; their real selves. The training is actually getting them to act as their real selves; the real self that is buried beneath the image that they have, or their environment has created for them."

Yellow House undertakes to nurture this creativity simply because it is there and not because money or position are the key to releasing it. It is something from which the working class in this country has largely been excluded, even in so-called 'free' schools like Summerhill, whose students are invariably taken from the families of wealth or status. Not so at Yellow House.

Just as money is not needed to walk through the Yellow House door, neither is the work of the group structured around anything to do with hierarchy, station in life, precociousness, 'sex-appeal' or any of the other fatuous presumptions the middle and ruling class claim for their kind. What Yellow House aims to offer is a safe and respecting environment not only to work in, but to be seen and to be heard without being judged, to enable each to explore their own self, free from external assumptions being drawn from accent, physique, mannerisms, language, an extrovert nature or whatever. Articulation of what each carries inside is more fundamentally important than following any social pattern derived from class, cliques, in-crowds or élites. Who you really are is what counts, not who you know or what your people do for a living.

Working-class lives

There is absolutely nothing run-of-the-mill or superficial about Yellow House theatre group. Every action leads to a young, working-class person gaining in self-esteem and self-confidence. No performance is ever scripted, nor is there a reliance on elaborate sets or gaudy costumes. The players are entirely themselves, most often making statements about growing up in inner-city Liverpool through the mediums of poetry and music. Repeatedly the title of each production

speaks of the youngster's aspirations: 'Peace Breaks Out', 'Reclaiming the City', 'Looking for Freedom', 'Between Two Worlds'.

Allowed the opportunity to think about the state of the world on their own terms, it's what youth wants for the future that comes across loud and clear. These kids don't want war, exploitation, restraint, violence. It's adult society that does this to them, destroys all their best convictions, refuses them the right to build the kind of world they desire, directs them down the useless road of consumerist greed, where the essence of being fully human, wholly alive and constructively engaged with the world is lost, perhaps forever. This is a fate that is not going to befall anyone passing through the doors of the Yellow House.

To give a flavour of what Yellow House represents, take this. Responding to a typically conversational remark about the opening performance of a newly-rehearsed production, its founder and inspiration, George McKane, was asked if he thought that the team were "up and ready for the evening's show". George replied that while the performance in front of the audience had its place in the scheme of things, it would not be the most important aspect by far. And he would be right. The most important aspect of the process, from beginning to end, had been the working alliance, the mutual camaraderie that cemented it all together, the blood, the sweat, the tears that the group had shed in support of one another behind the scenes. The thousand and one things that we, the audience, didn't see and very probably wouldn't even think of.

Like much that goes on in this taken-for-granted society, it was a question that had been asked from the consumer's point of view. It is how capitalism encourages us to think – lazily – without paying too much attention to detail and without anything but the most cursory examination of the pleasure we draw from the labour of others. It's the same when we buy clothes from Nike or Gap. What we focus on as consumers is the end product, completely oblivious to the long hours, gruelling conditions, the misery of compulsion that low-paid workers put into creating our comforts. It isn't done intentionally; it's just that we have become blind to many things. We just don't see it. Consumer capitalism doesn't want us to see it. This is what George has put his finger on: it isn't what the public eventually sees that matters; it is the effort that goes to producing the finished article that has significance.

In the 15 years that George has been facilitating Yellow House, both it and its reputation have grown and grown. As is the case with any working-class initiative, George has had to fight hard for everything that has been achieved by Yellow House. A not-for-profit, non-commercial venture, Yellow House has had to struggle for funds to stay afloat. People have helped.

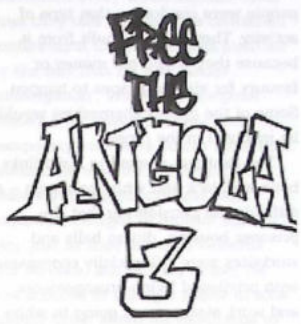
George has also found the additional emotional strength he needed to maintain his dream-turned-reality through his partner, Gosia, a native of Poland who has helped spread Yellow House's work across Europe and beyond, to Gdansk, Warsaw, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Koln, Palermo in Sicily, France, Tallin in Estonia, Ghana and other parts of Africa. The entire initiative has been working-class from start to finish. No 'names', no mile-wide grinning celebrities, no corporate sponsors. Nothing but working-class passion and commitment from two very determined working-class people alongside their Liverpool working-class students, who have shared in and built the dream. "A throwaway theatre, a theatre which won't go down in bourgeois history, but which is useful, like a newspaper article, a debate on political action. Theatre to burn when its purpose has been served. We are proud of our past, our history, our origins, we look to them but we are always moving forward."

We end this article with the poignant words of one of those student performers who enthralled a Liverpool audience with their work, 'To Dream in Colour': "I had never been involved in a performance like this before and was surprised at how natural it all seemed. It was really great how young people came together and created something together. I particularly like the fact that we all felt equal and that people who had been involved with Yellow House for a long time valued and listened to everyone's opinion". Yellow House. In Liverpool. Freedom to be who we are.

For more information on Yellow House try yellowhouse@btinternet.com or the website www.yellowhouse.info

The Angola 3
A life in blood

Known as 'The Farm', the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola is the largest prison in the United States. Around three-quarters of its inmates are African-American. According to one documentary, 'The Farm', 85% of the inmates who are sent to Angola will die there.



Angola is an 18,000-acre complex of ante-bellum plantations that the state of Louisiana purchased and converted into a prison around the turn of the century. Angola still operates on the plantation model. Prisoners perform back-breaking labour, harvesting cotton, sugar cane and other crops from dawn to dusk. In the early 1970s, Angola was known as the most brutal prison in the United States, with stabbings an almost daily occurrence. Armed 'inmate guards' patrolled the prison, and they frequently used their state-issued rifles to settle scores with other inmates. Dozens of bodies are rumoured to be buried in the swampland where Angola borders the Mississippi River.

The Angola 3

Among the men who have been marooned at Angola are Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace, and, until recently, Robert King Wilkerson. Of the world's political prisoners, few have been held in solitary confinement for as long as they have: nearly 30 years. All three men initially arrived at Angola with sentences for unrelated robberies and a dedication to political activism. Wallace and Woodfox founded a chapter of the Black Panther Party at Angola.

The Black Panther Party was a movement of extreme militant resistance to the American state begun by African-Americans. They believed in armed defence and resistance, and implemented those beliefs, setting up Black Panther chapters and militias across America. They had a radical programme and gave it substance through educational and welfare programmes for African-Americans, but needless to say were vilified and brutally suppressed by the American State, with many of their leaders killed or jailed, usually on the evidence of police spies.

Woodfox had joined the Party in New York, where he had fled after a daring 1969 escape from the courthouse in New Orleans. After spending time imprisoned under an assumed name in New York, where he helped organise several rebellions in the New York City correctional system, Woodfox, along with his new-found politics, was extradited back to Louisiana. Wallace became a Panther while he was incarcerated at the New Orleans Parrish Prison with the political prisoners known as the 'New Orleans Panther 12'. When they were shipped off to Angola, Woodfox and Wallace took the Black Panther Party with them.

Inside 'The Farm'

The Angola Panthers not only challenged the prison administration, but they also organised against the inmate social order that hindered

prisoner unity and played into the hands of the guards. The Panthers risked their lives to protect younger and weaker inmates from the rape, prostitution and sex slavery that pervaded prison life. As Woodfox puts it, "It wasn't much help to go to the security, because most of the security people were condoning that type of activity. They would benefit from it, because they would get money or favours for allowing rapes to happen. Some of the guards themselves would be involved in the rapes".

The Panthers worked to build links between black and white prisoners – a difficult feat considering that the prisoner housing, dining halls and worksites were still racially segregated, with privileged living arrangements and work assignments going to white prisoners. The BPP also exposed the widespread corruption of the people who ran Angola, many of whom came from families that had lived on state land and had worked at the prison for several generations. Guards often diverted food, grown by the prisoners for their own consumption, to their families and friends, or sold it in town. The administration of the prison responded to the rise of the Panthers by filling its isolation units with activist prisoners. The associate warden of the prison, Hayden Dees, testified in court proceedings to the need to keep "a certain type of militant or revolutionary inmate, maybe even a Communist type", on permanent lockdown. Their activism made them targets of the all-white prison administration. In 1972, in an effort to stop their organising, prison officials concocted murder charges against Woodfox and Wallace, and placed them on maximum security regimes. Relying on the paid-for testimony of prison snitches, Angola officials won convictions against the two men, who received sentences of life without parole. "I think the fact that they were never able to break my spirit or Herman Wallace's spirit, the fact that they could not shake our political beliefs or convictions, contributed to the reason why we were held in solitary confinement," Woodfox says.

Story of a frame-up

On 17 April 1972, the killing of Officer Brent Miller took place. Just the day before, a wooden guard shack had been firebombed and the guard inside burned. On the morning of the 17th there was a 'buck', or work stoppage, in the kitchen, where inmate workers were protesting their punishing 16-hour shifts. Inmates were told to return to their dormitories until food could be served. Within a short time, the buck had been resolved, and the inmates were ordered back to the dining hall.

Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace.

The Pine 1 dormitory emptied of all but a few inmates and a guard, Brent Miller. By the end of breakfast, Miller lay dead on the floor of Pine 1, 32 stab wounds in his body. In the days following the murder, prison officials terrorised Angola's black population. Interrogations continued night and day. There were mass beatings. Prisoners with Afro hairstyles – viewed, correctly, by officials as a political statement – had their hair forcibly shorn. For two days and nights prisoners withstood this abuse, and officials learned nothing about the murder. One inmate, Hezekiah Brown, was awakened sometime after midnight and confronted by most of the Angola administration, who told him that they could place him at the scene of Miller's murder. The institutional files of several Angola inmates, including Woodfox and Wallace, were arrayed before him. Terrified that he would be charged with the murder if he did not provide information, Brown picked out the files of Woodfox and Wallace, and accused them of the murder. More prisoners were coerced or bribed into testifying against Woodfox and Wallace, and in a racially-charged and wholly corrupt trial they were convicted of murder.

Later, prison officials themselves testified that the two primary inmate witnesses were known 'snitches' or liars. Prison records show that one of them, Hezekiah Brown, was paid one carton of cigarettes per week in exchange for his testimony. Shortly after he testified, Angola officials began a campaign to win a pardon for Brown, who was serving a life sentence. In 1986, Brown was released by Gov. Edwin Edwards, who is currently being tried on federal corruption charges. For the next two decades, Woodfox and Wallace, from their isolation cells, struggled to continue their activism. Over the years, they have helped hundreds of inmates with their legal cases. Until inmate-to-inmate mail was recently banned, they even helped inmates at a nearby women's prison with their legal work. In November 1998, while Woodfox was away from Angola awaiting trial, Wallace got nearly every inmate on Louisiana's death row to sign a petition in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Conviction reversed – twice

In 1992, a Louisiana court agreed that Woodfox's original conviction had been obtained in violation of the United States Constitution. The court granted Woodfox a new trial. Because Woodfox's original sentence, 50 years for armed robbery, was about to expire, the state convened a new grand jury to re-indict him for Brent Miller's murder. Woodfox's trial finally began on 7 December 1998. Because of the notoriety of the case in West Feliciana Parrish, where Angola is situated, the court granted Woodfox a change of venue. The proceedings were moved to Amite, near Baton Rouge, where much of Brent Miller's family lives and Miller's body is buried. The area is a hotbed of Ku Klux Klan activity. When the trial opened, the courtroom was packed with Woodfox's supporters who were elated as the state's evidence seemed to disintegrate. A familiar pattern emerged – 'difficult' prisoners targeted by corrupt guards, fabricated evidence, other prisoners bribed, threatened and coerced into giving evidence. Evidence given at the original trial was clearly inconsistent and contradictory, however, the racist trial judge co-operated with the state in admitting bizarre 'new' evidence and continually ruling against the defence. In order to divert the jury's attention from its compromised witnesses and lack of physical evidence, the prosecution dredged up information about Woodfox's Panther past and used it as evidence that he was guilty of the murder.

In the courtroom, using tactics eerily similar to those enlisted against Mumia Abu-Jamal, Woodfox's political statements were used to convict him (in the jury's mind) of racially-motivated murder. Failing to acknowledge the Panthers' history of establishing children's breakfast programmes, publishing an important community newspaper, or inventing the practice of 'cop-watching', the state was allowed to argue that Woodfox's membership of the organisation constituted evidence that he was a murderer. After closing arguments, the jury deliberated for only about five hours. In spite of the overwhelming lack of physical evidence, the fully-compromised credibility of the state's witnesses, and Woodfox's truthful polygraph examination and convincing testimony, the jury came back with a guilty verdict. After waiting two months, Woodfox was finally sentenced to life without possibility of probation, parole, or suspension of sentence.

Resistance continues

Woodfox's return to Angola in March 1999 offered him an opportunity for a bitter-sweet reunion with Wallace and Wilkerson, but their time together was short lived. In May 1999, following a peaceful hunger strike in which over 60 inmates protested worsening conditions and curtailed privileges, the Angola 3 were singled out as leaders and moved out of CCR. They were separated from one another in the horrific confines of Camp J, the prison's extreme punishment unit. In Camp J, inmates are confined to scorching cells for 24 hours on most days. Two or three times a week, they are allowed out of their cells to visit 'the yard', an outdoor cage, unshaded and topped by razor wire. Despite the fact that inmates are placed into this cage alone, they are nevertheless forced to try to exercise with their hands shackled to a chain around their waists. Meals often consist of spoiled meat. Visits with lawyers and family are through a thick metal screen.

In February 2000, after enduring eight months in Camp J, the Angola 3 were returned to the 'non-punitive' solitary confinement of CCR. Woodfox and Wallace are continuing their struggle to prove their innocence. Both have petitions pending before various courts. One alleges that the men are confined in violation of the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. They have been locked in small, non-air-conditioned cells for 23 hours a day since 1972. The current civil rights lawsuit was filed in the wake of an uprising at the prison in which an inmate and a guard were killed. The FBI is investigating allegations that Angola guards administered severe beatings to dozens of inmates in the days following the incident, which involved only a handful of prisoners. If Louisiana officials have their way, Woodfox and Wallace will die in their isolation cells at Angola.

The case of Robert King Wilkerson

Like Herman Wallace, Robert King Wilkerson was recruited into the Black Panther Party in the Orleans Parrish Prison. He arrived at Angola in 1972, soon after Officer Miller was killed and his reputation as an activist had preceded him. He was immediately placed in solitary confinement while he was 'investigated', but the prison authorities would not explain why.

Some 19 years later, perhaps by accident, the classification board told him that he was being investigated for the killing of Brent Miller, even though the murder took place before he got to Angola! For over 28 years, Angola's classification committee reviewed Wilkerson's Closed Cell Restricted placement every three months. Each time they told him that his continued confinement in isolation was justified by the fact that he was 'under investigation'. Wilkerson's original sentence for armed robbery and escape expired years before his actual release. He would have been freed years ago if Angola officials hadn't concocted charges of murder against him, just as they did with Woodfox and Wallace. But in King's case, he was accused of killing a fellow inmate, August Kelly. When his case came to trial, the judge ordered both defendants shackled and their mouths taped shut in front of the jury. Wilkerson was convicted, almost entirely on the basis of two inmates' testimony. In 1974, the Louisiana Supreme Court reversed Wilkerson's conviction, ruling that it had been improper for the trial judge to gag Wilkerson in response to a co-defendant's outbursts. Wilkerson was tried again in 1975. Just as before, Wilkerson was tried in St Francisville, the closest town to Angola, where most of the jury pool is composed of prison employees, their families and friends. This time, one of the state's inmate witnesses refused to testify. Brewer, Wilkerson's former co-defendant, took the stand and testified that he alone had committed the killing, in self-defence. Nevertheless the jury re-convicted Wilkerson. Once again, he received a sentence of life without possibility of parole.

In 1994, the US Court of Appeals granted Wilkerson a new trial because African-Americans and women had unconstitutionally been excluded from the grand jury that indicted him. Only months later, however, the Court decided to rehear the case and reversed its decision, taking away his new trial. In 2000, after years of legal struggles, the Fifth Circuit Court finally ruled in Wilkerson's favour. The

case was remanded back to a lower court and, sensing defeat, the state offered him a plea bargain. If he would plead guilty to accessory after the fact, it would agree to a sentence of time served and Wilkerson would go home. Because he had played no role in the murder of August Kelly, Wilkerson was reluctant to admit guilt to any charge. However, after agonising discussions with family and friends, Wilkerson decided to accept the deal. The state, however, would not let him go quietly. On the appointed day, Wilkerson arrived in court to find out that the state was now insisting that he plead guilty to conspiracy to commit murder. The District Attorney's office, it seems, feared that letting Wilkerson off too easily might subject them to a very expensive lawsuit. In the end, with a large contingent of family and friends watching from the courtroom gallery, Wilkerson decided to go through with the deal. He entered his plea, returned to Angola for processing, and later that afternoon, walked out of Angola's front gate a free man.

A prison within a prison

In an interview in July 2001, Wilkerson recounted how he joined the Black Panther Party in New Orleans Parrish Prison and how the state retaliated against him: "When I was initially arrested in February 1970 [for a robbery he didn't commit]... I became aware of the Black Panther Party and it spoke to things that I couldn't address at the time, and it helped me to regain focus on what was taking place in society. I became a rebel at that point. I joined the Black Panther Party... We became an extension of the Black Panther Party. We carried its programme into the Parrish Prison through certain means of communication. We started to deal with conditions in the Parrish Prison. We organised a hunger strike. At one time we got almost the whole prison – I think about 700 prisoners – to go on a hunger strike. The prison conditions were horrible.... It was filthy. The sanitary conditions were intolerable. The food was horrible.... We were treated with so much indignity that we

A free man: Robert King Wilkerson.

decided that we would demand to be treated with some form of respect. So that's why we went on a hunger strike. We were successful. After we went on the hunger strike the prison came along and did some things and they kind of revised some of their actions toward inmates. But it also focused attention on some inmates..."

Recent federal law has greatly restricted repeat appeals like Wilkerson's, creating huge evidentiary barriers that are almost impossible to resolve. A prisoner must show a constitutional violation at his trial that contributed to the conviction and that "it is more likely than not that no reasonable juror could have convicted him in light of the new evidence". Rather than face a new trial against Wilkerson with no evidence, the prosecutors allowed him to plead to charges that allowed him to walk out of jail with time served. "Hell yeah, I'm bitter," Wilkerson said after his release. "I was not only unjustly confined but I was locked away in a prison within a prison. But I am able to rise above the bitterness that comes from being locked away unjustly for 28 years in solitary confinement. I will rise above the bitterness because I have work to do. I have left two of my comrades and other folks behind. I think my goal now is to remain focused. Work for our comrades, with the other people who are working for them. I think that we have set a precedent. I think the same thing that happened for me can happen for them. Like myself, they were unjustly convicted and they are being held in solitary confinement for crimes they did not commit. The prison officials know they didn't do it. But they have continued those lies for 30 years.... We want to focus on the whole prison industrial complex. There are a lot of guys in Angola who are innocent. All the records, all the facts show that they are innocent. It is incumbent upon me to fight for them as well as my comrades. If I got out, we can also get them out."

Robert King Wilkerson, along with Althea Francois (an ex-Black Panther and prison rights activist) have recently completed a successful tour including Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford and Birmingham, to highlight the case of the Angola 3 and boost the campaign to free Woodfox and Wallace – a campaign the Anarchist Federation is proud to highlight and to have contributed to in some small way.

The story of the Angola 3 is a story of only a few of the many thousands of African-Americans, overwhelmingly working-class people, who are arrested, falsely charged, convicted and confined to a brutal, corrupt and murderous prison regime, often run for profit by huge, private corporations. All parts of the ruling class of America collude in effectively enslaving up to two million Americans. Prison guard unions and administrators collaborate to lobby and bribe state and federal legislators. Party machines that elect the judges who punish the indicted get their pay-offs as political donations and favours, as do the judges themselves, and the legislators, the lawyers, the prison wardens and guards. As 'political' prisoners, Woodfox, Wallace and Wilkerson have paid a savage price for their challenges to state-oppression of mainly working class African-Americans. These working class people are forced, both inside and out of prison, to pay a different kind of price, working in conditions of wage- and semi-slavery to feed the industrial consumerist society they are denied access to and which daily kills and brutalises their communities. *To find out more or offer help go to http://www.prisonactivist.org/angola/ or email louisiana.injustice@ btinternet.com*

Two American anarchist poets

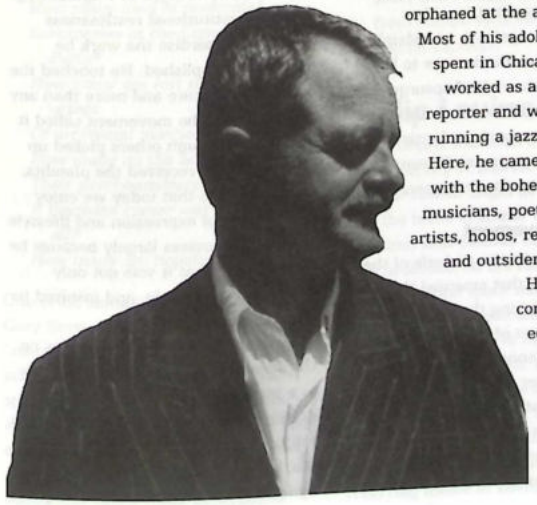
The anarchist poetry of Kenneth Rexroth and Philip Levine

Perhaps surprisingly, the United States has been the home of a number of poets who have expressed anarchist ideas in their works. But then again, there are strong traditions of immigrant anarchism among Jews, Italians, Spaniards and Russians. There is the radical workers' organisation, the Industrial Workers of the World. There is also the libertarian tradition among intellectuals, dating back to Thoreau. And there is a 'bohemian' tradition, often interconnected with these other movements, which above all had its home in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York.

Kenneth Rexroth

Labor power on the market,
Firepower on the battlefield,
It is all one merely two
Aspects of the same monster.
THE DRAGON AND THE UNICORN

Kenneth Rexroth was born in 1905 in Indiana, into a family that had a long line of freethinkers, feminists, abolitionists, socialists and anarchists. His father used to drink whisky with Eugene Debs, the socialist leader. He had an enlightened upbringing but then had the misfortune of being orphaned at the age of 12. Most of his adolescence was spent in Chicago, where he worked as a newspaper reporter and was involved in running a jazz tea shop. Here, he came in contact with the bohemian world of musicians, poets, writers, artists, hobos, revolutionaries and outsiders.



He was almost completely self-educated, with only five years of formal schooling. He read avidly, began to write poetry, paint abstract paintings, worked in avant-garde theatre and taught himself several languages. Like the European writer, Malaquais, he took to the road in his late teens. He ranged, he roamed, he rambled. He worked at all sorts of jobs, sometimes as a cowboy cook, sometimes as a wrangler, and in farm and forestry jobs. He worked as a toothbrush maker and as a peddler of pamphlets on diet. He even managed to make it to Paris and back as a stowaway. There he met many important radical artists, including the surrealists. The anarchist, Alexander Berkman, told him whilst he was in France not to become another expatriate and he returned. Becoming an anarchist at an early age, he saw through the Bolshevik myth as soon as 1921, when the Kronstadt sailors uprising was crushed by Lenin and co.

In 1927, he joined the Industrial Workers of the World working for a while on its newspaper. In Chicago, he set up a Dadaist group. He carried on independent activity in the '30s. Settling in San Francisco, he was involved in the newssheet, the *Waterfront Worker*, which exhorted dockers to organise. (In later life he entertained his friends with renditions of IWW and Spanish anarchist songs and sometimes used the IWW address "Dear Fellow Worker" in letters.)

With the collapse of the revolutionary wave, he began to dig in, maintaining and seeking out contact with those who had preserved their radicalism, looking for reassessment and reappraisal. Where possible he spoke out against the established order. We have to remember that in this most grievous period, it was an extraordinary achievement to maintain revolutionary optimism. The perversions of Bolshevism had meant that as Kenneth said, "There was no one left who was not completely centred on the Kremlin, either as a mindless Stalinist

hatchet man or a psychopathic anti-Bolshevik". He was also able to make the acute observation that, "the socialist and trade union movements in the West have functioned in reality – not just as governors to insure that steam is let off when the pressure gets too high, not just as what are now called 'fail safe' devices, though they certainly are that – but as essential parts of the motive organisation of capitalism, more, in other words, like carburettors that insure there will be just the right mixture of fuel and air for each new demand on the engine".

Conscientious objector

In World War II he refused to take part in the clash of opposing capitalist states and was a conscientious objector, doing alternative service working in a psychiatric ward. During the war he formed the antimilitarist Randolph Bourne Council (named after the libertarian writer who had coined the phrase "War is the Health of the State"). He helped Japanese-Americans who were being interned by the thousands in concentration camps, devising ways by which many were able to avoid internment.

Down in Berkeley from 1944 to 1948, the magazine *Circle*, which united local 'Berkeley Renaissance' writers and exiled European Surrealist poets, expressed anarchist and anti-authoritarian views (Rexroth contributed to it). In their last issue, an ad for a New Writers Group stated that, "We believe in the possibility of a culture which fights for its freedom, which protects the economic interests of its workers in all fields including the arts, and which can create for itself new forms and new voices, against reaction and the threat of war".

After the war, Rexroth was involved in the setting up of the San Francisco Anarchist Circle (later the Libertarian Circle). Anarchists like David Koven, surviving older Italian and Spanish anarchists, and conscientious objectors returning from the Waldorf detention camp, took part. Lively weekly meetings discussed all sorts of subjects from the Spanish revolution, to Kronstadt and Makhno, to the ideas of anarchists like Goldman, Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Kropotkin, the Anarchist Women's Movement, Sex and Anarchy. The sessions at Rexroth's house were enriched by his food (he was a superb cook) and his huge and encyclopaedic knowledge. Rexroth's actions were designed to trigger what he felt was needed for a successful transition to an anarchist society – the development of a new consciousness. The little magazine, *Ark*, which was set up (printed on a small hand press from 1947) was more militant than its forebear to the south, *Circle*. It proclaimed: "Today, at this catastrophic point in time, the validity if not the future of the anarchist position is more than ever established. It has become a polished mirror in which the falsehoods of political modes stand naked."

When all the other social commentators were bluntly asserting that all revolt and dissidence had ended, he was able to say, "The youngest generation is in a state of revolt so absolute that its elders cannot even recognise it...". Members of the Libertarian Circle were to be key players in the radical upsurge that became known as the San Francisco Renaissance – as poets and artists, in free radio, in experimental theatre and in the little magazine movement.

The Beat movement

Rexroth was to be the midwife of the Beat movement that emerged that succeeded in uniting the dissident poets and writers of both the East and West Coasts. Kenneth hated being called the Father of the Beats – a movement of which he had many criticisms – but he was able to see that he and they were united in their mutual antagonism to the ruling "convergence of interest – the business community, military imperialism, political reaction, the hysterical, tear and mud drenched guilt of the ex-Stalinist, ex-Trotskyist American intellectuals".

Rexroth was to preside at the birth pains of the San Francisco Renaissance, which led directly on to the emergence of the Beat movement, at the Six Gallery event in San Francisco, where Allen Ginsburg's powerful anti-authoritarian poem 'Howl' was read out to a eager and excited audience of several hundreds in an electric, drunken atmosphere, with Jack Kerouac as cheerleader and rhythm-maker.

William Everson says what I feel about Rexroth better than I could, so let's hear him speak: "He is a powerful spokesman for any cause he espouses. A born journalist, he has a flair for vigorous public speech and the guts to speak out in unequivocal terms. He has fantastic intellectual and moral courage, taking on the establishment and throwing it on the defensive through the sheer force of his invective. His rhetoric is savage, sometimes shockingly so, but it is never ineffectual.... His faults are the excesses of his virtues and he quarrels with his friends as readily as he clobbers his enemies.... He tends to drop the movement he has fostered as soon as it shows signs of fragmenting. But his constitutional restlessness could not jeopardise the work he actually accomplished. He touched the nerve of the future and more than any other voice in the movement called it into being. Though others picked up his mantle and received the plaudits, it remains true that today we enjoy the freedom of expression and lifestyle we actually possess largely because he convinced us that it was not only desirable but possible, and inspired us to make it be".

Rexroth placed too much stress on the development of a radical lifestyle as a fortress against capitalism to the detriment of struggle. His increasingly religious turn, in the last years of his life, is jarring for many atheists and agnostics. Nevertheless, both his prose and his poems are deeply anarchist and deeply combative. In 'The Phoenix and the Tortoise', he wrote:

The State is the organization
Of the evil instincts of mankind.

In 'For Eli Jacobson', one of his most moving poems, Rexroth remembers a dead friend:

....We were comrades
Together, we believed we
Would see with our own eyes the new
World where man was no longer
Wolf to man, but men and women
Were all brothers and lovers
Together. We will not see it.
We will not see it, none of us.
It is farther off than we thought
[...]
We will be remembered, all
Of us, always, by all men,
In the good days now so far away.
If the good days never come,
We will not know. We will not care.
Our lives were the best. We were the
Happiest men alive in our day.

In one of his angriest poems, 'Thou Shalt Not Kill', Rexroth talks of the toll that the collapse of the revolutionary wave had on so many writers, artists and intellectuals.

How many stopped writing at thirty?
How many died of prefrontal
Lobotomies in the Communist Party?
How many are lost in the back wards
Of provincial madhouses?
How many on the advice of
Their psychoanalysts, decided
A business career was best after all?
How many are hopeless alcoholics?

One critic snidely called Rexroth (and Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen) "members of the bear-shit-on-the-trail school of poetry". Rexroth did indeed spend a lot of time in mountain and wilderness, thought that this time was a splendid antidote to the scourges of urban capitalist life, and wrote beautifully about these experiences.

But often, in the middle of such a poem, we are pulled back to ideas of struggle, just as I myself, walking in the mountains, have turned to thoughts of revolution.

Here Rexroth thinks about the Italian-American anarchist, Bartomeleo Vanzetti, and his comrade, Nicola Sacco, murdered by the State. (He had visited them both in prison.)

I saw you both marching in an army
You with the red and black flag,
Sacco with the rattlesnake banner.
I kicked steps up the last snow bank and came
To the indescribably blue and fragrant
Polemonium and the dead sky and the sterile
Crystalline granite and final monolith of the summit.
These are the things that will last a long time, Vanzetti,
I am glad that once on your day I have stood among them.
Some day mountains will be named after you and Sacco.
They will be here and your name with them,
"When these days are but a dim remembering of the time
When man was wolf to man".
I think men will be remembering you a long time
Standing on the mountains
Many men, a long time, comrade.

From CLIMBING MILESTONE MOUNTAIN
August 22,1937.

Philip Levine

Philip Levine was born in the industrial city of Detroit to parents of Russian Jewish origin in 1928. Detroit was the home of Father Coughlin, a notorious anti-Semitic Catholic priest who broadcast on the radio every Sunday. Levine spent most of his childhood and adolescence fighting people who wanted to beat him up because he was Jewish. Identifying with anti-fascism, he progressed to a discovery of anarchism, and in particular Spanish anarchism. Spanish anarchism and anarchists are a recurring theme in Levine's poems.

Levine was educated in state schools and at an early age had to take jobs in the factories of Detroit. Many of these were badly-paid, unhealthy and unsafe. The conditions of working life and the way people survive them, and are affected by them is another recurring theme in his poetry. Levine has been called the poet of the proletariat by one critic, and indeed there are few others who deal with factory life and can replicate the experience of it as Levine does.

Levine began to write poetry while he was going to night school at Wayne State University and working days in the car plants. He has written 16 books of poetry. In the first two *On the Edge* (1963) and *Not This Pig* (1968) Levine deals with those caught up in situations not of their own making. In 'Animals Are Passing From Our Lives' the pig about to be sent to the abattoir intends to keep its dignity, no matter what, as if that were some sort of victory. Wage labour turns everything human into a commodity, the poems illustrate, and they are often harrowing in their depiction of working misery.

This is further expanded upon in Levine's third book *They Feed, They Lion* (not a misprint). Levine picked this phrase up from a black workmate in Detroit and in the title poem – his most fiery – he deals with the seething anger and foul conditions and racism that led to the Detroit riots of 1967.

A subsequent book of poems, *The Names of the Lost*, is dedicated to the Spanish anarchist Durruti, "and the world he said is growing here in my heart this moment". One of the poems 'Gift for a Believer' is for the Anarchist artist Flavio Costantini and deals with the lives of the many fallen anarchists who have been used by Costantini as subject material for his paintings. Another, 'For the Fallen' talks about a visit to the Montjuich cemetery in Barcelona where Durruti, his comrade Ascaso and the libertarian educationalist Ferrer are buried.

Levine returns to this theme in his *7 Years from Somewhere*. The book's cover is illustrated with a photo of the

Discussion board

The Anarchist Federation now has a discussion board at the following address:http://flag.blackened.net/wwwthreads
Log on if you fancy a chat.

graves of Durruti and Ferrer, but the greatest poem in it, 'Francisco, I'll Bring You Red Carnations' deals with Francisco Ascaso:

For two there are floral
Displays, but Ascaso faces
Eternity with only a stone.
Maybe as it should be. He was
A stone, a stone and a blade,
The first grinding and sharpening
The other.
And below in the city Levine
describes
Industrial filth and
the burning mists of gasoline
Levine ends with the hope
We have it here
Growing in our hearts, as
Your comrade said, and when
We give it up with our last
Breaths someone will gasp it home
to their lives.

Further reading

Read *The Relevance of Rexroth*, a pamphlet written by the Situationist, Ken Knabb, for a passionate appreciation of what Rexroth was about. Published by the Bureau of Public Secrets PO Box 1044, Berkeley, California 94701.

And 'In Search of a New World: The Anarchist Dream in the Poetry of Philip Levine', by Robert Hedin in *American Poetry* (1986).

Review

***Bash the Fash (1). Anti-fascist recollections 1984-93.* K Bullstreet. Kate Sharpley Library. 31pp. No price shown.**

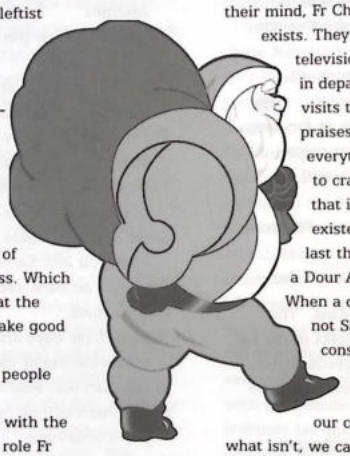
This pamphlet consists mainly of personal reminiscences by an anarchist involved in physical resistance to fascist groups (NF, BNP) in this country. As such, it is absorbing and often amusing. What it lacks in analysis, it makes up for in eyewitness accounts. The '80s and '90s saw the fascists beaten off the streets. Whilst they are now changing their tactics to 'community issues' as a result, it should be remembered that any street mobilisation by them needs to be countered physically and with maximum determination.

Letters

In defence of Father Christmas

As we head into summer, let nobody accuse anarchists of not being topical...

There is a certain irony when people denounce lies and the unreal, and conclude their argument by painting a picture of the free society. That irony ran throughout the article, 'Did You Give Santa the Sack?', (*Organise!* no.57). Similarly, such articles are used as evidence that the anarchist movement, like other dour leftist puritanical movements, is out of touch with the day-to-day important things and too much in touch with the navel-gazing intellectualoids of the political class. Which is not to say that the article didn't make good points...



Whilst most people would agree wholeheartedly with the criticism of the role Fr Christmas plays in our beloved consumerist society, they may baulk at laying the whole thing on him. Similarly, they may not share the view that Fr Christmas is a weapon, which the adults wield against 'their' young. They may disapprove of provocation-loaded words such as 'lie' and 'liar'. They may interpret the article as an example of how well-meaning adults impose their politics on 'their' children.

Above all, we need to remember that we are shaped by the society in which we live. In this society, Fr Christmas does exist for children and it would be a very misguided parent who sat on their child's bed on 25 December to explain to their weeping children that, "Santa is just a tool that other parents use to persuade, bribe, intimidate, or coerce children into obedience and conformity". It's another thing altogether actually to make Santa into the moral guardian that he's supposed to be. In other words, Fr Christmas can make his usual deliveries to your house without you having to tell your kids that he only visits good children. In fact, why not go the whole hog and suggest that he only visits children who make their teachers' lives hell?

As for whether or not we 'lie' to our children when we talk about Fr Christmas, I think it's important to remember that our children live in a very different reality. They are not simply young adults who haven't learnt to think correctly and logically. Children are children and they think in a way that is correct and logical for children. In their mind, Fr Christmas obviously exists. They see him on the television; they can talk to him in department stores etc; he visits their school; he sings the praises of Coca Cola; he flogs everything from the Big Issue to crates of Bells Whiskey. If that isn't proof positive of his existence, then what is? The last thing that a child needs is a Dour Adult banning Santa. When a child asks whether or not Santa is real, a far more constructive approach might be to ask what the child thinks. Rather than tell our children what is real and what isn't, we can let them decide for themselves.

Santa Claus is not the problem here. The writer of the article was astute enough to see the real problem, which, as ever, is the society that we live in and the way it takes a relatively innocuous thing, manipulates it to its own ends and renders it grubby and unattractive. It doesn't matter whether or not we tell our children about Santa. The problem is that the system uses Santa to force us to buy more, to get deeper into debt and to drip feed the ideas of consumerism into the bloodstream of our young.

Santa is decried as an 'eternal myth' in the article. Parents are 'liars'. But before we begin to throw mud, we should be far more self-critical. After all, we are proponents of a myth too. We talk about the anarchist vision. We see ourselves as revolutionaries. We get together to talk about how to bring down the state. But is what we say what we do? All too often we are paying taxes, financing the armed forces which will ultimately be used against us; buying into the property market; driving around in our pollution-creating machines; avoiding looking at the labels to see if this cheap T-shirt is ethically sound; not asking questions about where our purchases come from; buying drugs to keep us sedated; compromising eternally in order to live our lives, and a million and one etceteras. We can draw up blueprints of the free society, but what are we really doing to get us there? The myth of the free society is far more dangerous than the myth of Fr Christmas. It tempts us to devote hours of critical thought into dreaming up how things will be. All of our efforts are expounded on explaining how decisions will be reached in the free society; how children will live in a free society; even how bedtime stories will be told in the free society!

The article asked, "Is there anything to be said in Santa's defence and, by analogy, in the willingness of humans to lie to their children and others (and to create, disseminate and defend entirely non-real phenomena) in order to alter their behaviour or perception of themselves on a mass scale?". The conclusion was, "Nothing". But Fr Christmas doesn't belong to us. He doesn't need us to defend him and we certainly have no right to deconstruct him. He belongs to children. He may be manipulated by us (either to sell, sell, sell or to attack the capitalist beast), but the final decision as to whether or not he exists must rest with children.

We, on the other hand, need to look seriously at our own world. We need to think about how we, as anarchists, are contributing to the health of the system by lying, creating, disseminating and defending our myths and our dreams. It's our adult world which causes the problem; what are we doing about it?

Diarmuid

Reply from an AF member (in a personal capacity):

Diarmuid's letter makes a number of valid points and criticisms, which deserve exploring, however he has missed the main point.

The article was not an attempt at political correctness run mad, but to use a topical character to explore the cultural importance of the consumerist spectacle that Diarmuid himself admits Santa can represent.

Poor old Santa was being used as an example of a class of things that bedevil our society, the props and walls of consumerism that relative wealth allow us to hide behind. It was not the intent of the article to pour scorn on story-telling, myth-making or the emotions that the unreal have the power to stir. The free society needs passion, excitement and wonder and its members will be the better for experiencing all the emotions life has to offer. But we will not shield anyone from its realities either, for to do so would be to deny ourselves true freedom, the freedom to make choices.

How much easier just to go along...

The concept of Father Christmas was also being used to examine the ritualised and alienated nature of our lives and the willingness of people, including ourselves, to accept certain 'rules of the game', although as revolutionaries we ought not to. How often do we challenge the pedagogic teacher, the proselytising evangelical, the politician, and the pundit? How much easier to just go along with it all.

The difficulty I have with the Diarmuid's critique is where it asserts that, because capitalism has created a lie (the myth of Santa's reality) and perpetuated it successfully, that reality must be accepted and perpetuated by us. A more telling failure was to forget that means and ends are one. Lies cannot beget truth. The human impulse to share has been distorted by capitalism into a series of ritualistic and ceremonial transactions. Of course, it is possible to argue these are the traditions that (in part) make up our culture, but they are so tainted that in the creation of the free society they will need to be abandoned, rejected and the impulse to share that is at the heart of our humanity given expression every day of our lives. Nor can we really, surely, pick and choose which part of capitalism's spectacle we accept and endorse and which we reject. We can only reclaim parts of reality by deconstructing it and shaping it to our

own desires and needs but not otherwise.

Diarmuid was right to say that the imagination of children is different to our own and the capacity to imagine an important part of our ability to build realities around us. This is what humans do. But in doing so he attacked the need to create new realities (or rather to uncover them) in favour of the child's freedom to believe whatever society wants it to believe. And, in doing that, he has denied the possibility of revolution. For this is what revolutionaries do – challenge the artificial realities of capitalism – its lies and the lies we perpetuate and disseminate – and the way they are created, maintained and manipulated. What is the myth of McDonald's and what the reality? What human experience does Nike offer and what reality lies underneath? Are human beings 'naturally' warlike, competitive, acquisitive? And who says so?

The role of the revolutionary is to uncover and rediscover truth. It is in challenging the false reality and so-called 'truths' of capitalism that we pose our greatest challenge to it; all else is resistance, not revolution. In Ursula K LeGuin's novel of an anarchist utopia, *The Dispossessed*, its central character, Shevek, realises that the free society has become bureaucratic, moralistic, decayed. If it is to survive it must rediscover its revolutionary potential. When asked what he will do, he replies, "I'm going to go and unbuild walls". The walls Shevek went to unbuild were traditions, habits, rituals; customary ways of doing things, the rules that had crept into society and undermined freedom. He went to challenge the lies society was telling the people and the people were telling themselves. If we are truly to be free, we too must unbuild walls. And tell the truth.

Aspects of Anarchism

New from the AF. This pamphlet covers many of the basic ideas of anarchist communism, from the meaning of anarchism, through violence, the environment to democracy and how to change society.

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Civilisation

Dear *Organise!*

Your 'What's wrong with civilisation?' article is an interesting and welcome introduction to the topic of 'primitivism' and the major problems with this bankrupt ideology. Having studied primitivism in some detail over a number of years, I think the most important question you can ask is, are the primitivists serious in their wish to go back to the palaeolithic? This opens up the whole contradiction at the centre of their ideological belief system. On the one hand, they extol the life-ways of the Kalahari bushmen, or they say they want to go 'Back to Croatan', but on the other hand, they are wedded to their mobile phones, computers and websites. John Zerzan, for example, supposedly criticises symbols, art and language, but then declares, "For me, words are a better weapon to bring down the system than a gun would be". We see from this that when push comes to shove, he does not believe his own critique of language.

Similarly (as no doubt posted on some primitivist website somewhere), the *Unabomber Manifesto*, section 200 declares: "If the revolutionaries permit themselves to have any other goal than the destruction of technology, they will be tempted to use technology as a tool for reaching that other goal. If they give in to that temptation they will fall right back into the technological trap, because modern technology is a unified, tightly-organised system."

Primitivism is fundamentally false and hypocritical, a posture, the ultimate end point of postmodern irony. It has done, and is doing great harm to the radical cause. Primitivism is not a position which can be held to with any integrity. I would urge activists everywhere to have nothing to do with it.

If people want to know more about the detail, and arguments about this, please consult my *Primitivism: An Illusion with No Future*, price $3 from MPG, PO Box 10384, Eugene, OR 97440, USA.

Steve Booth
Editor, Green Anarchist magazine
9 Ash Avenue, Galgate, Lancaster
LA2 0NP

Is *Organise!* slipping?

Dear *Organise!*

Your magazine has always been respected for its analytical and critical approach, cutting through the bullshit peddled by leftists about the myths of national liberation and trade unionism. I appreciated the first article on anti-capitalism in the last issue. But in other parts of the same issue, the good old critical approach of *Organise!* seems to be lacking. I realise articles unless signed represent individual views of the writers, rather than the Anarchist Federation as a whole, but was Phoolan Devi as wonderful as made out? She fought for the lower castes and especially was seen as a symbol of resistance of lower-caste women, but her life involves a number of murky incidents and she ended up as an MP, surely something no anti-parliamentarian can admire.

But on to Murray Bookchin. Whilst I would tend to defend him in general against people like the primitivist John Zerzan and Bob 'Copper's Nark' Black, I am not sure he is as pure as the driven snow. He attempts to distance himself from his followers, who see libertarian municipalism as an excuse for running in municipal elections, but this always comes over as ambiguous. What really is his attitude to 'libertarian' candidates standing for council elections, and how far does his analysis go of municipal councils which *Organise!* has rightly pointed out is the State in its local form and extension?

Finally, on Alfredo Bonnano. Whilst appreciating his early writings on unions and national liberation, I tend to feel that his later stuff is composed of a lot of individualist posturing, and has really little to do with class struggle. In fact, I get the impression he has given up on the capacity of the masses/working class to bring about revolutionary change, though I am willing to change my mind as I have not yet read his most recent writings. Oh, and what goes for Bonnano, isn't that true of Bookchin – that he has very little faith in the power of mass revolutionary change?

Sebastian Melmoth
East London

David Edelstadt *Continued from back page*

cultural circle in Buenos Aires after him.

One of the first songs concerning the exploitation of women workers was based on an Edelstadt poem '*Arbeiter Froyen*' (Women Workers). This song appeared in the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* in 1891 and was popular in America and indeed in Europe. Litvak, a leader of the Bund (the social-democratic Jewish organisation in the Russian Empire) wrote that it was one of the most popular songs in Tsarist Russia. During the tanners' strike at Krinek near Grodno in 1897, the strikers sang this song and '*In Kampf*' (In Struggle). This song on women was one of the most popular among those sung at Minsk in 1896-1897 and was sung again in New York between 1982-1987:

Women workers, women in suffering
Women who languish in the home and at the factory, why do you support such occupations,
Why don't you help us to build a temple to liberty, to human happiness?
Help us and raise the world from its poverty and to realise all that we want.
Let's struggle together like powerful lions,
For liberty, for liberty, for our ideal.

Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF?
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I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

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Revolutionary portraits
David Edelstadt

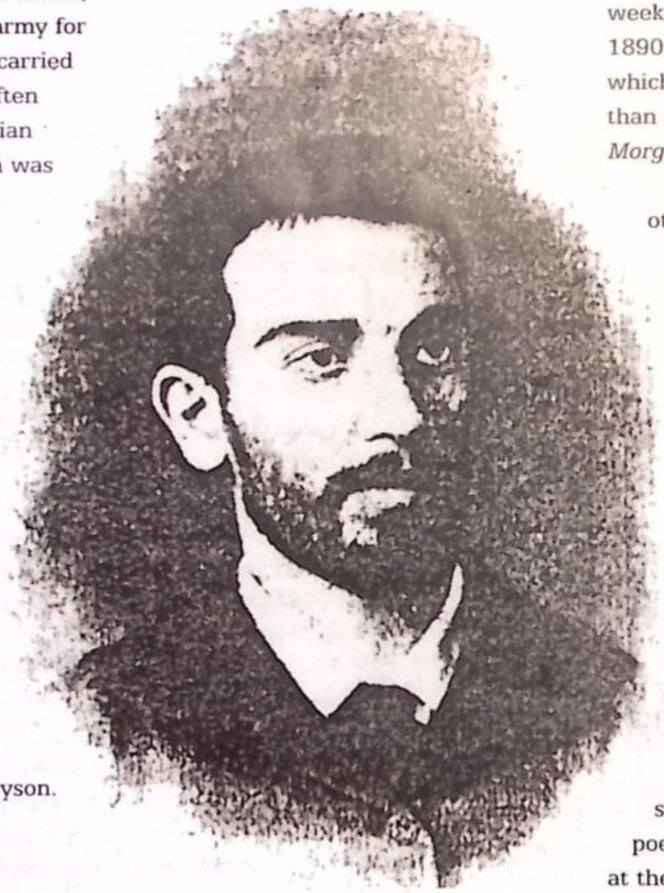
We continue our series, 'Revolutionary Portraits' on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

"A great poet and one of the finest types of Anarchist that ever lived." Emma Goldman

David Edelstadt was born on 9 May 1866 at Kaluga in Russia. He was deeply affected by the life of his father, enrolled by force in the Tsar's army for 25 years. This type of practice carried out by the Russian army was often used against Jews. Whilst Russian was his mother tongue, Yiddish was his language of communication and propaganda. He used it from his emigration to the United States in 1882.

He participated in the first Jewish anarchist group in New York, The Pioneers of Liberty (*Pionire der Frayhayt*). The framing of the Chicago Haymarket Anarchists had led to its formation. The first dozen workers who set up the group were joined by Edelstadt and other gifted writers and speakers – Saul Yanovsky, Roman Lewis, Hillel Solotaroff, Moshe Katz, JA Maryson. All in their 20s, this group "displayed, apart from unusual literary and oratorical skills, a vigour and dynamic energy that made a powerful impression on the immigrants of the Lower East Side, the predominantly Jewish quarter of New York in which the Pioneers of Liberty were located" (Paul Avrich).

Edelstadt and the others held meetings, sponsored rallies and raised funds to help the Chicago Anarchists. They organised a ball on the Lower East Side which raised $100 (quite a large sum then), which was sent to the families of the defendants. They began to spread anarchist propaganda among the Jewish immigrants, who were arriving in the States in increasing numbers. They set up a club on Orchard Street where they organised weekly lectures and discussions. They



brought out literature in Yiddish, including a pamphlet on the Haymarket case.

The intense propaganda led to the establishment of anarchist circles in other towns – Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia and Providence. Edelstadt and others travelled to Philadelphia to deliver talks. The group kept in touch with the Jewish anarchists in London, and Edelstadt was one of those who contributed to the London Yiddish anarchist paper *Arbeter Fraynd* (Workers' Friend).

In 1889, the Pioneers started a weekly *Varhayt* (Truth) He began to write poems in Yiddish and had his first 'To Truth' published in *Varhayt*. *Varhayt* only lasted five months and Edelstadt then began writing for an interim anarchist weekly, *Der Morgenshtern* (The Morning Star). Two weeks after it ceased publication in 1890, a new weekly anarchist paper, which was to have a far longer life than either *Varhayt* or *Der Morgenshtern*, was to appear.

Edelstadt was to succeed two others as the chief editor of this new paper, *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (Free Worker's Voice). He set up various columns and features, which contributed to its popular success. He produced a series of tribute poems to the judicially murdered Chicago Anarchists. During this brief period of intense creativity, he wrote many poems. These texts were full of a social lyricism, exalting the workers' struggle for dignity and emancipation. A buttonhole maker by trade, "a child of poverty, a dreamer of struggle" (a self-description), his poems were set to music and sung at the picnics and rallies of Jewish workers.

The bad conditions in both the sweatshops and the tenements meant that he contracted TB and was forced to quit his post in October 1891. He moved to Denver for a cure. Although he continued to send poems to the paper, the end was near. He died there on 17 October 1892 at the age of 26 (his brother and sister-in-law also died of this disease). In the next few years, Edelstadt cultural groups sprang up in Chicago, Boston and other cities. An Edelstadt Singing Society was founded in New York. In Argentina many years later, Jewish anarchists named their

Continued on page 26

T/SOR/16/28

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ISSUE 59
MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF) and the Anarchist Federation Ireland. *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* three times a year. To meet this target we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first?

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in late Feb 2003.

All contributions for *Organise!* should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk.

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Organise! back issues

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Issue 19: The Poll Tax Rebellion
Issue 27: LA Riots; Yugoslavia; Malcolm X
Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise
Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics
Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'Boa Ervin; Syndicalism
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Issue 50: GM Foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland – the 'peace' process.
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Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything, plus whatever else we can find lying around.

We have also inherited copies of *The Second Best of Subversion*, with articles from the now-defunct paper, *Subversion*. They are free from our Manchester address.

Safe, free, diverse & consensual:
Anarchism and sex

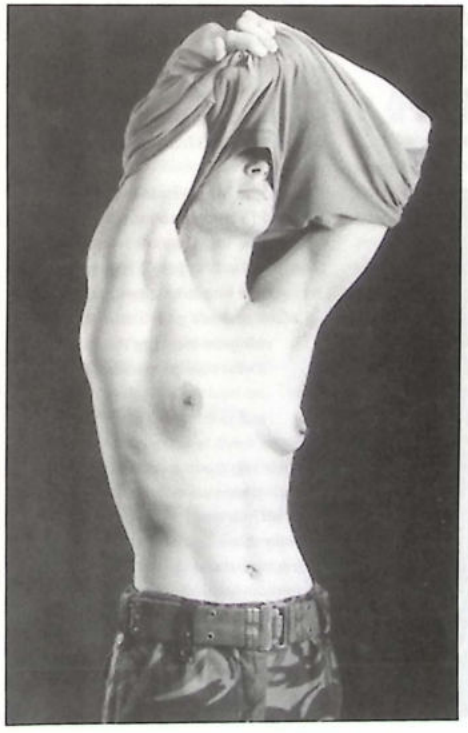
Within the broader anarchist movement, attitudes to sex and sexuality tend to be pretty varied.

Anarchist views on sex can range from the idea that 'anything goes' between consenting adults, to the more traditional approaches of what constitutes free love between individuals. One thing these diverse opinions do have in common, however, is the idea of sexual freedom and the opposition to sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, being pro sexual freedom and anti sexual exploitation is open to wide interpretation and can encompass diverse, and sometimes conflicting, analyses from one anarchist to the next.

Within certain historic anarchist traditions (as well as within the left), there has often been a significant strand of 'puritanism' towards sex and any activities deemed generally frivolous.

We all know the story about Emma Goldman dancing all night with the blokes at an anarchist social event, then being chastised for behaviour not befitting a revolutionary (we know about her subsequent outrage too). We also know that some sections of the anarchist movement in the Spanish revolution have been accused of similar puritanism, and the idea that anarchist and communist revolutionaries should somehow live their lives like ascetic monks or nuns still, in some quarters, continues to this day.

The novels of 19th century anarchist writers like Octave Mirbeau were classed as pornography by the literary establishment of the time. *The Diary of a Chambermaid* portrayed the sexual habits of the bourgeoisie in such a way that Jean Grave commented, "What filth and decay there is under the pretty surface of our society". To be fair, Mirbeau's proletarian anti-heroine, Celestine, was certainly no sexual saint either, but the emphasis on the so-called sexual 'perversity' and 'depravity' of the rich at play clearly implies the notion that sexual waywardness is in some way bourgeois. This is really not that dissimilar from the old Militant Tendency (now the Socialist Party) telling us a few years back that homosexuality was nothing but a bourgeois disease.



Victorian values

Added to this, is the enduring effect of certain elements within the women's liberation movement, which led many feminists and their male supporters to adopt 'puritanical' attitudes towards sex and sexuality, and to embrace censorship against pornography and all kinds of erotica.

Without doubt, many positive things came out of feminism and the women's movement in general, yet a major downside was the growth in the belief that men in general are inherently exploitative towards women (admittedly based on the very real fact that many men do actually behave in this way for much or at least some of the time), whereas women were always seen as victims of male domination and oppression. For some feminists there followed from this view a giant leap of faith, in which it was alleged that all men were either actual or at least potential sexual abusers of women, while women, on the other hand, were seen as fundamentally saintly and almost asexual beings

open to corruption by men; and those women who, by doing things like actively going out, picking up and fucking blokes (or even entering into relationships with 'the enemy'), were in fact merely living as the dupes of men and their patriarchal system. Subsequently, this 'asexual exploitee' view of women holds much in common with the bog standard religious 'woman as madonna or whore' mythology and contains more than a hint of good old 'Victorian values'. Sadly, even the occasional anarchist still clings to some of this patronising moral baggage.

Under capitalism, everything and everyone is a commodity, we all have our market price. And whether by selling our labour power as workers, or by buying things necessary (and some things not so necessary) as consumers, we all exist as part and parcel of the commodity system, of world capitalism.

Sex then, is no different and is something that is not only marketable but aggressively marketed under capitalism (as we all know, sex sells). However, when sex is bought and sold – whether via pornography, prostitution, etc – the left, pro-censorship feminists and some anarchists have a tendency to see this trade as somehow worse than many other forms of capitalist exploitation.

Lapping it up

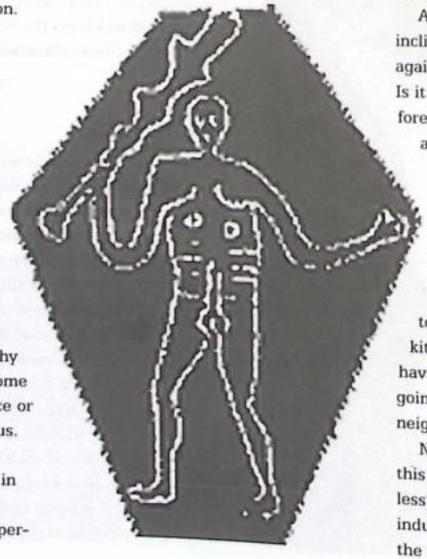
As an example, a lap-dancing club recently opened up in Nottingham and a campaign was promptly organised to shut it down. Now, I don't know whether anarchists were actually involved in this campaign, but I do know that some anarchists see such a campaign as a worthy cause.

I understand the arguments of the pro-censorship feminists. However, the view that pornography (and in this case lap-dancing) in some way incites men to commit violence or rape against women is very dubious. Also, the simplistic overview of pornography and the sex industry in general – which is seen as a place where the women involved are super-exploited victims – seems to me to be one built on a form of conservatism or liberalism, crypto-religious moralism, with a large helping of sensationalistic media mythology thrown in for good measure. But only a smattering of this view is based on the actual reality of sex work or the sex industry, which, in truth, is extremely broad and multi-faceted. Yes, sections of it are horrendously exploitative, sometimes tantamount to real (non-wage) slavery, and being little more than a means for commercial interests big and small, legitimate and illegal, to coin it in.

But I'd say that (certainly in this country) many sections of the sex industry are *no more, no less* exploitative than any other capitalist concern and other sections still are about as unexploitative as you can get under capitalism.

So to generalise about the sex industry too much leads to a very limited and naive understanding of it and says nothing about actual conditions there.

Now I tend to think of lap-dancing clubs as, well... crap. But in the socio-economic scheme of things, within capitalism, I'd put them in the above 'no more, no less' category of the system's exploitative industries. In lap-dancing clubs, there are usually strict safety rules of 'no physical contact' between dancers and spectators and if you don't mind being gawped at by some bloke or blokes, then the money isn't that bad and pays a lot better than most other working class jobs. It's also the kind of job where you can come and go as you please and the hours can often be quite flexible. True, employers usually discriminate by only employing women deemed stereotypically 'attractive' or 'sexy' and by having an upper age limit – on the basis of that being what brings in the paying punters.



So as anarchist communists, our attitude to a lap-dancing club should be pretty much on a similar basis to our attitude to a cinema or a foundry or a supermarket – in other words, it's about business as usual. But, of course, it isn't that simple, is it? Why do people get so up in arms about these clubs that they want to campaign to shut them down more than they do the local rag trade sweat shop that pays 'illegal' workers a quid fifty an hour for a 12 hour day? Is it because in the former a woman has the audacity to dance naked or semi-naked for a few hours for a half-decent wage? Or is it because the campaigners don't want to have (admittedly not very) naughty goings on behind closed doors in their neighbourhood?

And why are people much less inclined to bother about campaigning against the local rag trade sweat shop? Is it because it's 'just a bunch of foreigners' working there and they actually don't give a shit about refugees working long hours, in awful conditions with little or no health and safety regulation, and getting paid piss poor money? Is it because working in the rag trade is at least 'honest toil' where no one has to get their kit off? Or are people just OK about having those kinds of seedy things going on behind closed doors in their neighbourhood?

Now when talking about what I call this middle bracket of 'no more no less' exploitative sections of the sex industry (e.g. lap-dancing clubs), I get the sneaking suspicion that what it all comes down to is morality. What's really at issue here is that people use their bodies in a sexual manner for money. *"And only a really, really exploited person would do that, wouldn't they? Or someone psychologically damaged... sexually abused as a child... a helpless dupe... someone on the side of the enemy... Well, how can any self-respecting woman allow herself to be objectified in such a way?"*

Well I'm sorry to say this, but it's as if some of us haven't really moved on from Queen Victoria's day and sex is still the big taboo it always was. Sex for sale, sex as a commodity, sex in public, sex in print and on film, off-beat, bizarre, kinky, fetishistic, wayward sex, missionary style sex, in fact any kind of sex at all in a public arena is the issue.

People who choose to attack the local lap-dancing club but not their local petrol station do so because of personal morality/moralism about sex. Sex makes it a moral issue because if we were just talking about a simple economic relationship, then it really is as humdrum as the next industry. But we're not, are we? So, when certain anarchists single out the lap-dancing club or the adult bookshop, they're not basing their actions on a class analysis, but on what they think is morally good or bad for the rest of us (which actually brings into question their interpretation of anarchism). This elevation of their opposition to the sex industry is a personal moral choice, but it's got absolutely nothing to do with either a revolutionary class analysis or with anarchism itself.

Revolutionary skin flicks

Another disturbing thing about pro-censorship ideology is its (possibly wilful) ignorance of sexual openness as a liberating even revolutionary force. It's no coincidence that during many revolutionary episodes, pornography and erotica have played a significant role in popular revolutionary culture. Sexual images created for pleasure have of course been around for millennia but usually they were only accessible to the well-off, the educated, and the high clergy. But during the French revolution, greater free sexual expression and the distribution of pornography really came to the fore. In other words, it became freely available to us plebs as well. I remember reading about the early days of the Portuguese revolution of 1974, when the fascist dictatorship had just fallen and all the forbidden literature was suddenly becoming freely available, so one could find works by Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx and Lenin sitting alongside an assortment of porno mags!

And historically, it's also no coincidence, that when the reaction begins to reassert itself, both Bakunin and the sex magazines are the first to go under the proverbial counter. Neither is it a coincidence, that pornography and so called 'illicit sex' is illegal and severely punished under some of the most repressive (and incidentally anti-women) regimes in the world.

...if pornography were the food of love, this would be a Big Mac...

That's not to say pornography is a wonderful liberating thing in itself. It isn't. The vast majority of pornography (particularly the soft-core variety produced by the big corporate media empires) is absolutely dreadful, reflecting very sexist capitalistic values and only seems geared to appeal to the dreariest most sexually-repressed conformist male. Hence, if pornography were the food of love, this would be a Big Mac.

It's interesting to note that such soft-core trash is quite freely available in any newsagent or high street WH Smiths; it is actively promoted by mainstream media and distribution networks and is seen by the establishment as acceptable and pandered to by some of the most conservative of institutions. On the other hand, hard-core pornography is seen as dangerous, subversive and is usually a police matter to be dealt with under the Obscene Publications Act. While some of the material classed as hard-core can be decidedly dodgy, and even dangerous, it's also no surprise that some of the more interesting, non-mainstream, least stereotypical and sexually diverse erotic material finds itself put neatly under this heading.

Anarcho-sex with bread and butter!

Having said all this, pornography (good and bad) is of course just more spectacle; something to be used by the passive (usually) observer. Sex and sexuality, however, are not passive, but things we do, things we actively participate in. Which leads me to the question, can there be such a thing as an anarchist view of sex or even an anarchist sexuality?

The fact that certain readers may profoundly disagree with some of the points raised in this article means it's very tempting to answer no.

Also some comrades may argue that it's all just a diversion from the real struggles against capitalism and the bread and butter class issues.

Yet I don't think that an anarchist view of sex and sexuality is in any way a diversion.

Moreover, I believe it's not that far away from the so called 'bread and butter' class issues as some comrades might think.

Food, drink, a roof over our heads and sex are all basic human needs. OK, the lack of sex doesn't generally kill you (as is the case with starvation), but being sex-starved can seriously fuck you up mentally. Having said this, many adults do participate in fairly regular sexual activity and of course sometimes it's all very good, while at other times it's not at all enjoyable. Added to this, the fact that more open and diverse sexualities are vigorously repressed not only by the family, church, state, the education system, peer group pressure, the mass media and of course capitalism in general, but also by some of those who adhere to apparently more progressive ideologies; rebels, radicals, leftists, anarchists and communists.

Consequently, although not exactly starving, I'd guess that much of the world's adult population is at least sexually malnourished or undernourished (which can lead to problems such as lack of self confidence, depression and other mental illnesses, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide). So I'd say this situation is something definitely worth addressing by revolutionaries.

Deviancy

There's also the problematic view which I mentioned earlier, that any sexual waywardness (usually labelled 'deviance', 'depravity' or 'perversion') is in some way a product of capitalism, a bourgeois trait. If this is the case, will sex in an anarchist society only be the kind which is firmly rooted in anarcho-communist social reality? Or more bluntly, does this mean that any possible future anarchist communist society would be relatively 'kink free'? I, for one, sincerely hope not. A sexual future like that, sort of reminds me of the childhood view of the Christian 'Heaven', where you have to sit on a cloud all day playing a harp. And, quite rightly, Hell always seemed much more appealing to me. Hmmm... unless you're into sexual fantasies based on the socially just and egalitarian cummings and goings between the workers' assembly member and the mandated local delegate... or maybe a little 'mass action' would appeal?

Sex, of course, can often reflect social realities, but it doesn't have to and can be totally unrelated to anything we know or have experienced. Anyway, let's face it, sex doesn't always work too well on the rational and philosophical level (except in articles such as this). And people do all sorts of inexplicable, weird and wacky things when they're in their purely sexual mode. This may involve things like playing out sexual power exchange fantasies, fetishism, transgendered activities, etc. Often, the reasons we like doing the things that we do cannot actually be explained, nor would we necessarily want to explain them either (just in case it makes something we find really exciting, suddenly seem mundane). Nor does that mean it's unhealthy sexual tastes or activities we are indulging in (or want to indulge in).

Unfortunately, psychiatry has traditionally offered medication and the asylum for any wayward and 'bizarre' sexual tendencies in people (particularly in working class people), and bourgeois society at large and its media likes to label such divergent people as 'perverts'.

It's important that we never fall into this line of thinking. If revolutionary anarchists were ever to start denouncing anyone with a 'non-mainstream' sexual orientation or preference, it would be a total disaster not only for anarchism as a philosophy, but also for our class and for future humanity. For me, the revolutionary anarchist attitude to sex and sexuality has to encompass the belief that sexual activities and relations should be *safe, free, diverse and consensual*; acknowledging that people are queer, bi or hetero, ranging from the monogamous to the polyamourous, from the disinterested asexual to the rampant polysexual, and from the softest vanilla to the hardest edge playing SM-er. At the end of the day, if it's a safe and mutually consensual activity (however weird it may seem) and all parties involved enjoy themselves, then what's the big deal?

Hopefully anarchism is about sexual freedom, openness, honesty and equality. And when I say this, I'm not talking about everyone devising rota systems to see whose turn it is to go on top. The honesty is when people are truly and non-judgementally in a position to sexually express themselves without fear of being labelled a pervert, a deviant or a poof.

And when people are really being sexually honest, some weird shit can start to happen. And that, in its own way, can be quite revolutionary.

Resistance!

Resistance is our monthly news sheet.

Our widespread distribution of *Resistance* means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country – with consistent and dogged hard work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of *Resistance*, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to 'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL. Better still, take a bundle to distribute!

AF Ireland produce their own regular newssheet, *Resistance Ireland*, which is available from: Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505 Belfast, BT12 6BQ. Phone: 07951 079719.

AF Alba/Scotland produce a newssheet, *Ar-a-mach*, which is available from AF Alba/Scotland, PO Box 248, Aberdeen 1JE, Scotland.

All our newssheets are available in either text or pdf format from the AF Ireland website: http://www.afireland.cjb.net

Interview with an anarchist **dominatrix**

For two years Mistress Venus was a professional dominatrix in central London. She's also an anarchist communist. So, we at Organise! thought we'd take the opportunity to ask her a few questions about this.

Organise!: *There's a popularly-held belief, also prevalent among the left and some anarchists, that anyone (particularly female) who works in the sex industry, is in some way a victim and has been forced into that situation. How realistic is this view?*

Mistress Venus: I think it's very important to make distinctions between workers in different areas of 'the sex industry'. The role played by a girl working the streets is very different from the role (as that's exactly what it is) played by a professional dominatrix. Speaking from personal experience, my decision to work as a dominatrix was purely my own choice and was something I wanted to do. It was an extension of having spent years going to fetish clubs and performing as a fetish model. I knew the scene, the roles played and exactly what was involved. I had no illusions about it and I was in no way coerced into it.I kept my day job (working in a shop), worked when I wanted to and unlike many, had no monetary pressures I was forced into supporting.

I must admit that the approach I took was a very practical one: I only ever worked with at least one other dominatrix, who worked as my 'maid'. And sometimes a male colleague stayed within the building and helped set up the 'sessions'. Sessions were pre-arranged, with the 'client' and myself both discussing our own limits and expectations, though obviously not all sex workers are afforded this level of co-ordination and support!

There's a very different attitude from the 'client' towards a dominatrix, compared to that towards a girl on the streets, I think. To my 'clients', I was the embodiment of their desires. They worshipped everything about me, and I had the power to control whether they were allowed to even look at me. And, if they displeased me, they cleaned my bathroom out with a toothbrush!

There was never any sex involved in the 'sessions'. The sexual energy from the client is derived from the playing and reversal of power roles, from a form of humiliation and degradation absent from their 'normal' daily lives. That's not to say, however, that I didn't, at times, feel used, or stop and question just exactly what I was doing. In fact, at times, it served to reinforce ideas I'd previously held about the exploitation of women by men, particularly, in the case of a dominatrix, sometimes very rich and powerful men!

To my 'clients', I was the embodiment of their desires.

Ultimately, I stopped though. I chose to give it up. I wasn't interested in, or enraptured by, the money it brought in (and these guys would pay up to £120 an hour, £30 extra to be pissed on!). It was something I chose to enter, and chose to leave; a choice many 'sex workers' don't always have!

O: *You say your 'clients' worshipped you when you were in your dominatrix role, and you also talk about having power and control over them. How does that role fit in with you being an anarchist?*

MV: During a domination session both parties are consenting adults who choose to perform their particular role – whether it be the role of the master, the all-powerful oppressor, or that of the weak, oppressed slave – and

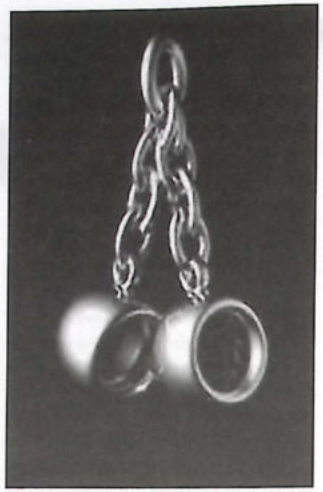
choose their own limits. The session is an escape from reality; a performance where the clients enter the realm of their imagination, and briefly live out fetishes that are scorned in this society.

The roles we play mirror the power-based capitalistic society we live in today, a society of greed, oppression and subversion, a society of force, silence and pain. This is in no way representative of the lifestyle I choose to live in as an anarchist, a society based on equality, respect and self-government.

Domination is a game, the adult's version of what children call 'playing'. It's not real and, for me personally, it does not reflect elements of my personality. I enjoy the sessions as a performer, as an experimenter and as an exhibitionist... It's the attention I crave. The thrill of power and control is a novelty in a game, not something that I desire to be present in my 'real life'. I think it is very important, in a society based on freedom, that people should be able to express themselves and their fetishes and fantasies freely and in a safe environment (providing all parties are consenting), whether those fetishes involve being whipped as a naughty school-kid or dressing up as a nurse!

***O:** Earlier, you mentioned that your work sometimes reinforced issues around the exploitation of women by men. Did you feel you were more exploited than you might have been in other kinds of work?*

MV: During a domination session, the traditional, stereotypical gender roles are usually reversed. During the sessions the female dominatrix becomes the power holder, taking control over the male. This is a mirroring of the patriarchal society we inhabit today; where males traditionally have the 'best' jobs, the higher wages, the positions of power in society and the home; and where the male is seen as the all-authoritative figure in control. Throughout the world, history is told through the eyes of the male, and women are repressed through, for



example, religion, violence, exploitation and inequality. The role of the dominatrix temporarily reclaims some of this power and hands it back to the woman; one might almost say it is the man who becomes the exploited. However, I do consider the 'sex industry' as being one of the very vehicles used by men and society to exploit women, an arena where women use their bodies as an object for sale. And being a dominatrix is still making a living using the 'being' and body as an object, regardless of who wields the so-called 'power' for the duration of the session (or who holds the whip!).

Often, yes, I was left feeling as though I had been exploited, possibly more so than if I had a more 'conventionally acceptable' or 'normal' job. Regardless of the fact that I enjoyed the role play and enjoyed the escapism, the costume and grandeur of the part, I still felt as though my body had been used by another person as something they had control over, simply by the fact that they were paying for the session, paying for me to dress up in a certain way and behave in a certain way at a certain time (even though we could say the same about a number of roles we play in our life!).

I believe the body is the last aspect of our lives we have any control over. This explains the large and growing amount of interest in fetishes such as body adornment and modification (tattoos, piercings, scarification etc). And when it dawns on me that I am making a living by someone ultimately controlling what I am doing with my body, the element of how much choice I have over my body and life has to be questioned. There is a feeling of having been exploited, felt by nearly everyone who has to work hard in this society, which is based on inequality and division. I've felt it whether I was working in a shop or in an office, or as a cleaner, which were my previous professions, but the feeling of having your own body exploited is a much more raw one, a much more personal one, that does leave you feeling 'naked'.

There is a big difference when money becomes involved. I spent years going to fetish clubs, where all the 'games' and activities are done by choice with willing participants, everyone enjoying the role they played. But when the exchange of money becomes involved, the element of choice is gone and the realms of 'body fascism' open up. If people are going to pay for services, they expect you to look a certain way!

Hence the feelings of exploitation creep into the normally pleasurable areas of your life.

***O:** We've seen the positive initiative of the setting up of the International Union of Sex Workers in this country. But, more recently, however, at least in London, they've affiliated to the GMB. Now, obviously, the AF would see this move towards mainstream trade unionism as retrogressive. But as someone who's worked in a job generally identified as being part of the sex industry, what do you think is the potential for better self-organisation among sex workers?*

MV: I think there's huge scope for potential, just as there is between workers within any industry. What it needs, however, is for various obstacles to be overcome both by ourselves and by society, and for barriers to be broken down, for example the barriers created by the 'separatist' attitudes so prevalent between workers, both within the same branch of work or within different branches. Once this is achieved, and we all begin to realise that our strength and support will stem from our working together, then we will be stepping closer to self-government and organisation, as opposed to resorting to being represented by a body so influenced by, and affiliated to, the Labour Party! By improving communication between the various workers and branches, and achieving the de-stigmatisation of the industry by society, we can begin to co-operate with one another to create a united body offering, for example, advice and information, and giving emotional and practical support for people, both already within the industry, and entering it.

We need to abolish all forms of control that are so common within the sex industry, and abolish the different levels of power; we need to work as one so that we are all informed, safe, supported and united, as opposed to working alone through force or need, in sometimes dangerous conditions. Sex work, in one form or another, will always be around, it always has been, and it's certainly not in any danger of disappearing – whether we live in a capitalist society or even in a moneyless anarchist society.

Sex work takes a myriad of different forms and is entered, used and left for a myriad of different reasons. It's just that in one of these societies workers within it will continue to be exploited, misrepresented and scorned by that very society itself, and in the other one we will have the power, ability and motivation to both be ourselves and govern ourselves!

Discussion board

The Anarchist Federation now has a discussion board at the following address: http://flag.blackened.net/wwwthreads

Log on if you fancy a chat.

Not in my *backyard*

This article sets out some of the main problems faced by sex workers in their relationship with the State, and concludes with a brief interview with Jenn Clamen of the International Union of Sex Workers.

You're self-employed, running a legal small business on a tight budget and want to advertise your services. For most, a card in the local shop window or phone box might be just the ticket. But not if you're a sex worker, it seems.

Clamp down

Though prostitution is legal, soliciting on the streets isn't. Until the Criminal Justice & Police Act came into force in 2001, the prostitute's tactic of advertising sex by putting cards in phone boxes was legal too – not anymore. It's estimated that 13m cards are distributed across Britain each year and in 2001 BT removed 150,000 from phone boxes in central London alone – though it didn't stop schoolboys swapping cards in playgrounds when the Pokemon craze died down! Apart from the waste of money, carding is now attracting severe penalties as the police and local councils clamp down.The police pose as clients and get the addresses of people selling sex. They are visited, warned, often the landlord is informed. With most landlords afraid of being charged with abetting prostitution, such a warning usually ends in eviction. The woman (and it usually is a woman, sometimes with children) is moved on again and again. Their livelihoods are lost as it takes time to re-build your client base. Immigration officials often accompany police, and women working illegally are issued a deportation order and dumped at the nearest airport. Sometimes the only way they can raise the airfare is to head back into town and go back on the streets. If they have been trafficked (smuggled into the country) they may still owe the traffickers their fare and be in immediate danger here and in their home countries. Cards at flats are confiscated and the card boys,

if caught, face heavy fines, up to £1,000, or 28 days in jail.

One operation in the area covered by right-wing Westminster Council (all-part of its family-friendly tourist strategy) led to 60 card boys being charged, though none of the women were. As Jenn Clamen says: "The real agenda is not getting rid of the cards, but getting rid of the women. Prohibition is unlikely to drive sex workers into convents but harassment will force them underground where there is less access to support networks and where they risk more violence."

Interview

***Organise!:** When was the union formed, what are its main policies, how many members does it have and what do they see as the main benefits of membership?*

Jenn: The IUSW was formed in 2000 and now has 100 members. It has recently affiliated to the GMB and its Sex Work & Fantasy Branch has 40 members.

The main demands of the IUSW are: decriminalisation of all aspects of sex work involving consenting adults; the right to form and join professional associations or unions; zero tolerance of coercion, violence, sexual abuse, child labour, rape and racism; legal

support for sex workers who want to sue those who exploit their labour; the right to travel across national boundaries and obtain work permits wherever we live; clean and safe places to work; the right to choose whether to work on our own or co-operatively with other sex workers; the absolute right to say no; access to training – our jobs require very special skills and professional standards; access to health clinics where we do not feel stigmatised; re-training programmes for sex workers who want to leave the industry; an end to social attitudes which stigmatise those who are or have been sex workers.

***O:** What are the main benefits of membership?*

Jenn: The main benefits of membership are that being part of a collective group that is ostracised and generally doesn't get to enjoy all of the benefits of a free society, gives power and confidence to people in the sex trade. Being part of the GMB has the usual practical benefits: discounted travel insurance, free legal advice, compensation for injuries at work (although this only applies to people working in wholly 'legal' aspects of the trade i.e. massage parlours or dance clubs).

***O:** What are the main forms of discrimination faced by sex workers?*

Jenn: Because the law around sex work is so contradictory and ambiguous, it is very difficult to ensure that sex workers can be safe and healthy in their jobs. This in itself is discrimination. The Government has set up the law to feign approval of sex work, by making it 'legal'. However, none of the activities around sex work (including living off the money earned) is legal. This too is discrimination. On a more practical level, sex work is not considered a real job, so people who sex work cannot enjoy the benefits of working in a 'real' job i.e. compensation if hurt, health benefits, etc.

***O:** Is sex work dangerous?*

Jenn: There is a lot of danger in sex work because of the lack of proper laws. Sex workers are exposed to a lot of violence from punters and pimps, if they have a pimp, because there are no laws to protect them. If raped or assaulted, proving it is difficult because generally the population thinks it's part of the job: many women who work on the street will tell you that this is exactly what police called to the scene will say. A lot of women are forced to work underground because they must remain out of sight so as not to get a fine for soliciting. This puts them in more danger, as they are not always familiar with the working area and the punters in that area.

***O:** To what extent are sex workers able to control their transactions with clients and their employers (if any)?*

Jenn: Sex Workers are usually in control of the transaction. For women who work in flats, it's a simple transaction. There is usually a maid, who answers the phone and keeps the money, and a working girl. The punter comes in, requests a service, woman gives a price, money is exchanged – simple. Where a woman has a pimp, a lot of her money goes over to him or her, resulting in a lack of control. With regards to services, however, most women determine what services they offer, and how they offer them, bar none. If people are new to the industry, it obviously takes time for them to devise their own working regime, so they may not be in as much control as they would like to be. In some massage parlours and escort agencies, and even flats, the owner will demand the girl see a particular client she may not want to see, or perform certain services like oral sex without a condom. However, the answer to this dilemma is simple, move to another sex working job. If a woman wants control over her business, she will seize it.

***O:** What is the general attitude of officialdom – police, social workers, local councils and so on?*

Jenn: The general attitude is that sex work is a pest. Most councils will deny that it exists in their area (very typical of posh suburban areas). At the same time they are beginning to use anti-social behaviour orders (introduced originally to deal with 'neighbours from hell') against street women – if breached they face up to five years in jail. A lot of the police and general public think it should be decriminalised but still maintain a 'not on my doorstep' attitude. There are a lot of people in favour of a 'red-light district' where sex work would be 'contained': fair enough, at least they are aiming for a decriminalised area.

***O:** And the Government?*

Jenn: The Government will not make any efforts to change the law; this is the main problem. The current laws themselves are the real problem, the nuisance. I think there is a general attitude that if the law made more sense, there wouldn't be so many problems. In the meantime, while the laws don't make sense, people think that visible sex work (I stress visible because a lot of it is indoors) is a pest – even though many of the people with this attitude are punters themselves.

***O:** What are the main other ways by which sex workers are controlled by society?*

Jenn: The lack of structure in the law controls the lives of sex workers. They cannot go public. They must live double lives. They must always be on guard because of a lack of safety. They must suffer with the stigma attached to sex working. They are not controlled as other people can be:

most are confident and self-assured. But in general, it's the law that gets you down.

***O:** Some people argue that street prostitution attracts kerb crawlers who accost women not interested in selling sex and are perceived as a menace to children. The trade seems to attract crime – especially drug-related crime – and can be a nuisance, affecting the whole neighbourhood. Are sex workers to blame for this and should they ply their trade indoors?*

Jenn: No. Street sex workers are not to blame for drugs or menacing punters. Many street workers are homeless and can't trade indoors. I have been to residents' meetings where this is suggested, but it's ridiculous: where would they go? They don't have homes. The main problem with street sex work (aside from complaints about mere visibility) is condoms and syringes around parks and schools. This is why needle exchanges and sex work projects exist, to help people dispose of them safely. The councils also have to train rubbish collectors to handle these things (with gloves, sterilizing equipment etc). Safety is the biggest issue in street sex work but I wouldn't blame the women themselves for a lack of it. The social context around street sex work does not allow for a dialogue between residents and working women.

***O:** What are the IUSW's proposals for addressing these issues of perceived and actual nuisance, crime and safety?*

Jenn: The anti-kerb crawling campaign being mounted currently in some areas is not a safe or effective way of targeting punters or sex workers; it makes sex work more dangerous by pushing the women further underground and into working areas they are not familiar with. With regards to punters approaching women who aren't sex workers, there is danger because some punters can get rude and intimidating. A designated working area may solve that problem. Educating residents and council members so that they do not need to feel against the women is one way. Decriminalising an area where sex workers can work, shower, and see punters is another. Residents need to acknowledge sex workers as residents and come to an understanding together about safety in the neighbourhood.

***O:** What change in the status of sex workers and society's attitudes to sex workers would you like to see?*

Jenn: Society, and especially Government, needs to pay attention to what is going on in the world, the fact that London is laden with sex and sex work, that there is a demand for it. That people need to feel protected. It would help if the double standard that most Britons have about sex was dumped, that the stereotypes of sleazy, broke sex workers was forgotten or changed for good.

***O:** What are the means by which this could come about?*

Jenn: Decriminalisation of all aspects of adult sex work involving consenting adults. Accepting sex work as a profession and a choice. Legislation needs to be changed.

An anarchist view

As anarchists we may have an inkling of some of the problems sex workers face. We too lead double lives and often find ourselves arrested for doing things that up to a moment before were entirely legal! Though there's not as much demand for our politics as there seems to be for sex, more's the pity!

We also recognise the truth that collective organisation brings strength and confidence. Some lessons have been well learnt. We would certainly support the formation of more IUSW branches and are glad to see that sex workers recognise the limitations of trade union membership! Where we differ perhaps is in expecting any change in attitude from Government or that legislation will do anything more than increase control and lessen perceived public nuisance while doing nothing to curb those who exploit or harm sex workers.

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in *Organise!*, you might be interested in these:

Black Flag. £1.50 per issue/£6 sub. BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX.

SchNEWS. Weekly direct action newssheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX.

Direct Action, anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation.£1.50 per issue/£5 subs. PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW.

Earth First! Action Update, monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12-issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich NR2 3AL.

Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally-related issues, including news and discussion on the anti-capitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet Radical Books, 1621 Fleet St, Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O, Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them through our website.

Class struggle in *China*

Ever since the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, the most advanced sections of capital have sought to integrate China into the world market.

The first steps towards definitively starting the process of integrating China appear finally to have been taken, with China's December 2001 entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

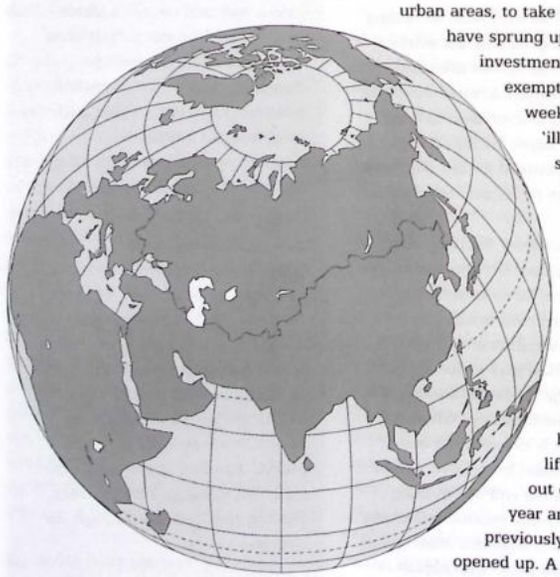
We can safely assume that this would not have occurred had not both parties seen benefits to making this move – on the one hand access to untapped markets and vast reserves of cheap labour, on the other a chance to build up modern technologies and infra-structure and solve a few social problems.

But this decision has also opened up a space for a resurgence of mass class struggle that did not exist prior to the restructuring of the last few decades. This opening follows from two separate but complementary dynamics: the destruction of the old state-owned and centrally-planned heavy industries of the north east, and the introduction of foreign capital to the coastal areas and the south.

Restructuring

The restructuring process began in the 1970s with the dismantling of the huge collective farms, the development of small-scale household plots and the gradual introduction of competitive markets. In the 1990s these family farms had largely been pushed aside by the growth of large-scale agri-business and the parallel rise of rural wage labour. This also led to the creation of around 200 million unemployed, landless peasants and a fall in the standard of living in the rural inland areas – current estimates put rural income at half that of the urban coastal areas. With entry to the WTO and consequent international competition, this number is expected to rise even further, as the *China Daily* remarked, "The country is facing a serious oversupply of labour with the number of people coming into the labour market reaching an unprecedented peak".

In scenes reminiscent of the enclosures associated with early industrialisation, these dispossessed workers have no option but to move to the newly-developing urban areas, to take up sweat-shop labour for the many new factories that have sprung up following the easing of restrictions on foreign investment, and state sanctioned tax and human rights exemptions. Often working 12 hours a day, seven days a week – and with no legal rights because many of them are 'illegals', having flouted the state's internal passport system to reach the cities – these are the workers that 'the new China' of 7% annual growth is being built on. The various 'Zones' the state has set up (economic, high-tech, finance and trade, export processing, etc) are in fact statements to foreign investors of the Chinese state's willingness to solve its rural problems by allowing these people to be ruthlessly exploited. Unsurprisingly, the workers are none too happy with this situation.



The second phase was to deal with the old, inefficient areas of the state-controlled economy. This basically entailed privatisation, mass sackings, the lifting of the state monopoly on trade and the phasing out of 'cradle to grave' social security. Ten million jobs a year are being lost, and this is expected to continue as previously ring-fenced areas such as telecoms and banking are opened up. A 'rust belt' has developed in the old industrial heartland of the northeast, which has seen the collapse of huge swathes of industries that whole regions were based around – 75% unemployment is not uncommon in many towns.

So, having identified the state's plans, what resistance is the working class putting up to these frontal attacks on their living conditions? The official strike statistics show that the number of declared strikes rose from 8,150 in 1992 to 120,000 in 1999, all illegal. Undoubtedly these figures are too low as they fail to record undeclared or wildcat strikes, and the blocking of roads and railway lines that have become increasingly common tactics.

The 'rustbelt' areas of the northeast have seen the largest amount of open class struggle since 1949, prompting the commander of the People's Armed Police, the main anti-riot force, to say police must prepare for an increase in 'mass incidents'. The most visible struggle has been that at Daqing Oilfield where 50,000 workers have besieged the management offices for months in a redundancy and benefits dispute, clashing with paramilitary police and overturning cars. The shrinking oil industry is seething with conflict elsewhere as well. Disputes over severance terms led to large protests at the Huabei field in Hebei Province and the Songjiang field in Jilin Province.

Ten million jobs a year are being lost, and this is expected to continue

These workers are symbols of the 'old China'. Most of them are middle-aged or nearing retirement, many of them had been on the *xiagang* system. That is, they were on the company books, did no work but were paid a living wage. That has now gone, and with cuts in pensions and heating allowances, these people are understandably worried how this will affect them as there is little chance of finding new work – hence the militancy of their actions.

This is mirrored in the protests in nearby Liaoyang, where large industrial disputes are common. In March this year, workers from six different companies co-operated on a scheme to protest about benefit and wage arrears. They blocked the main roads and chanted, "We are the working class!" Soon, workers from another 14 companies joined the protest; again the overwhelming majority were middle-aged or nearing retirement. A steel worker in his 50s, in a statement that could have been made by an Argentinean *piquetero*, claimed that they must use militant tactics, as "We have no other hope now".

In March 2001, 2,000 miners in the northern city of Datong barricaded roads and fought the police, as they protested over lay-offs and pay reductions. Ten thousand miners also occupied the centre of Fushun, blocking roads and railways (again, a tactic that is often used in Argentina). This form of protest has also been used in Wuhan, Sichuan and Sheyang.

In Lanzhou, 5,000 taxi drivers attempted to storm the Government offices in protest at increases in fines and licences – 3,000 police were needed to save the party officials. Sheyang workers took a more direct approach in the Sheda Toy Factory, taking hostage the factory owner and his wife. They were held for 20 days until back pay they had been promised was forthcoming. Importantly, the police refused to intervene, as, in their own words, they "did not wish to provoke the workers".

Maybe they could have passed this advice on to their brothers in Shuikou city, Guangdong province, where workers from the privately-owned Nanxuan Wool Textile Factory fought running battles with police and company security guards for three days running in June this year.

This is a significant development as it represents one of the first (reported at least) fights against the new foreign-owned companies, rather than the defensive battles being fought out in the old state-run centres. The workers here were the classic, newly-arrived to the city escapees from rural poverty, prepared to put up with intensive exploitation out fear of the (very real) consequences of not doing so.

The private security guards, who are notorious for their bullying behaviour, manhandled workers in the queue at the canteen, 800 workers then walked out in protest, only to be attacked by security with iron bars. Photographs of the clashes published in the Yangcheng Evening News showed blood trails around the factory grounds. The remainder of the 15,000 workers then turned on the guards, who were only rescued by the intervention of the paramilitary police. Three days of rioting followed, with all the factory windows being smashed, company cars and police trucks being torched. A Guangzhou labour correspondent remarked, "There is nothing unusual now about labour protest in Guangdong, but these events are unprecedented".

There has also been a spate of boss-killings, particularly in Hubei province in central China, another of the 'rustbelt' provinces. Children are now said to play a game called 'Kill the Boss' in which they re-enact managers' deaths, pretending to stab and throttle each other.

Linking struggle

So what are the chances of these disputes breaking out of their isolation and linking up with other autonomous working class actions? Unsurprisingly, the vastness of China is helping the state to keep these struggles cordoned off from each other, as is the state news and broadcasting monopoly – something which the Government has been very keen to safeguard recently, allowing satellite channels to broadcast

On the net

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You can also email us at:
anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

only approved material and restricting news coverage.

Any wider link-up, leading to a sustained period of struggle, is going to have to develop counter-information networks, such as those that sprung up in the Stalinist states. News of the dispersed disputes, how the state reacted, what tactics were successful or useless etc need to be circulated and developed by those in struggle. Permanent links will depend on how successful each sector (new industry or old) can be in supporting the others; this is the key question at the minute. Isolated disputes can be dealt with easily – bloodily or peacefully. What will really worry the state and foster working class confidence, is when struggles break out in one area and are followed by solidarity actions in another.

Limited struggle?

It is noticeable though, that the older workers are fighting for things like more generous redundancy packages or guarantees for pensions or other social security issues such as heating allowances and lower rents – essentially things to soften the blows of the remainder of their life – whilst the workers in the newer industries are looking for higher wages and fewer working hours. The former could possibly be characterised as a limited struggle, as one that will pass as China continues to integrate further into the world market, and the latter as a struggle that is open-ended and only going to reach its full development in the years to come.

The question of the elderly is very rapidly evolving into a class issue. The elderly population is presently 130 million, but is expected to more than double in the next generation, and this, combined with the effects of the 'one child' birth control policy (fewer young adults to look after parents) is leading to serious battles to safeguard pensions and related health schemes now before conditions get any worse.

The question of the elderly is very rapidly evolving into a class issue.

This can be seen in the trouble in the old industrial heartlands; the (ex)workers are trying to protect themselves before the state restructuring worsens conditions any further. We should recognise that this is a class struggle even if it doesn't appear in the usual forms. What's more, this is one of the few issues that concerns the whole of geographic China, and might possibly help the emergence of the counter-information networks mentioned above.

We should not be complacent about the role that China is being given in the class struggle in the other countries either. At the minute, the stability and developed infra-structure of the West continues to make it a worthwhile area to invest in – a rapidly developing and technologically-advanced China will be used as stick to beat other workers with. The threat of shifting work to one of the new 'economic zones' will offer bosses the opportunity to introduce measures designed to increase the already-monstrous productivity levels. Flexibility, casualisation, new organisations of work with constant supervision, so that not a second of the day is not spent working, are all already being introduced against fierce resistance – all under the cover of competition with cheap labour zones meaning there is little choice.

Not 'stealing our jobs'

The answer is not to oppose Chinese workers and accuse them of 'stealing our jobs', but to recognise that we are all part of a global working class, and that our needs are one and the same, and that by linking our struggles and raising them to an international level (as capital has already done), we can effectively block capital's plans, which can in turn allow us to develop the space to articulate a positive expression of these collective needs, directly and a higher level than the nation state, and so more effectively.

One thing is clear though: class struggle continues in China, and the state's plans are only serving to further advance the antagonism. What happens next depends on how far the workers are prepared to act in each other's defence and, outside of any state or official organs, on what forms of working class communication evolve, and on how far they are prepared to challenge the state locally, nationally and internationally.

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including pGp. If anybody you know in Britain speaks Serbo-Croat or if you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood, then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

The *Arditi del Popolo*

How the people's militias fought back against Italy's fascists.

By the end of World War I, the working class in Italy were in a state of revolutionary ferment. Not yet ready for the conquest of power themselves, workers and peasants by 1918 had won a variety of concessions from the state: an improvement of wages, the eight-hour day, and a recognition of collective contracts.

By 1919, however, a new radicalism had descended upon the labour movement. In that year alone, there were 1,663 strikes across the peninsula, while in August the newly-formed shop stewards' movement in Turin (the forerunner of the workers' councils) underlined the growth of a new vibrant militancy that drew its strength from the autonomous capacity of workers to organise themselves along libertarian lines and which had "the potential objective of preparing men, organisations and ideas, in a continuous pre-revolutionary control operation, so that they are ready to replace employer authority in the enterprise and impose a new discipline on social life".[1]

In the countryside, the peasantry opened up a second front against the state by occupying the land that had been promised them before the war. The Visochi decree of September 1919 merely validated the co-operatives that had already been set up while the 'red leagues' assisted the formation of strong unions of day labourers.

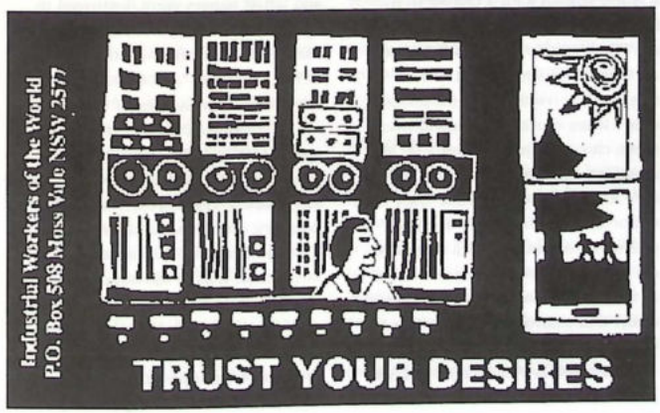
However, 1919 also marked the initial signs of capital defending itself against the growing onslaught. A meeting of industrialists and landowners at Genoa in April sealed the first stages of the 'holy alliance' against the rise of labour power. From this meeting were drawn up plans for the formation, in the following year, of both the General Federation of Industry and the General Federation of Agriculture, which together worked out a precise strategy for the dismantling of the labour unions and the nascent councils.

Alone, however, the industrialists and landowners could not undertake the struggle against the labour movement. The workers themselves had to be cowed into submission, had to have their spirit of revolt broken on the very streets they walked and the fields they sowed. For this, capital turned to the armed thuggery of fascism, and its biggest thug of all: Benito Mussolini.

Formation of the fascist squads

Immediately following the end of the war, there was a veritable flowering of anti-labour leagues: Mussolini's *Combat Fasci*, the Anti-Bolshevik League, *Fasci* for Social Education, Umus, Italy Redeemed, etc. At the same time, members of the *Arditi*, the war volunteer corps, on being demobilised, organised themselves into an élite force of 20,000 shock troops and were immediately put to use by the anti-labour movement.

This movement mostly comprised the middle or lower middle class. Ex-officers and NCOs, white collar workers, students and the self-employed all allied themselves to the fascist cause in the towns, while in the countryside the sons of tenant farmers, small landowners and estate managers were willing recruits in the war against the perceived Red Menace. The police



and the army both actively encouraged the fascists, urging ex-officers to join and train the squads, lending them vehicles and weapons, even allowing criminals to enrol in them with the promise of benefits and immunity. Arms permits, refused to workers and peasants, were freely handed over to the fascist squadrons, while munitions from the state arsenals gave the Blackshirts an immense military advantage over their enemies. Ultimately, by November 1921, the various hit squads were welded together into a military organisation known as the *Principi*, with a hierarchy of sections, cohorts, legions and a special uniform.

The *Arditi del Popolo*

To compensate for the shortcomings of the Socialist Party (PSI – *Partito Socialista Italiana*) and the main trade union, the CGL (see below), militants of various tendencies, anarcho-syndicalists, left socialists, communists and republicans formed, in June 1921, a people's militia, the *Arditi del Popolo* (AdP), to take the fight to the fascists.

While politically diverse, the AdP was a predominantly working class organisation. Workers were enlisted from factories, farms, railways, shipyards, building sites, ports and public transport. Some sections of the middle class also got involved, including students, office workers and other professional types.

Structurally, the AdP was run along military lines with battalions, companies and squads. Squads were made up of 10 members and a group leader. Four squads made up a company with a company commander and three companies made up a battalion with its own battalion commander. Cycle squads were used to maintain links between the general command and the workforce at large.

In spite of its structure, the AdP remained elastic enough to form a rapid reaction force in response to fascist threats. AdP behaviour was dictated by whatever political group held sway in a particular locale, although most sections were allowed virtual autonomy over their actions.

These sections were quickly set up in all parts of the country, either as new creations, or as part of already existing groups like the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI – *Partito Comunista d'Italia*), the paramilitary *Arditi Rossi* in Trieste, the Children of No-One (*Figli di Nessuno*) in Genova and Vercelli, or the Proletarian League (*Lega Proletaria* – linked to the PSI). Overall, at least 144 sections had been set up by the end of summer 1921, with a total of about 20,000 members. The largest sections were the 12 Lazio sections with about 3,300 members, followed by Tuscany, 18 sections, with a total of 3,000 members. Other regions were as follows:

Region	*Squads (s) battalions (b)*	*Members*
Umbria	16s	2,000
Marche	12s	1,000
Lombardy	17s	2,100
Tre Venezie	15s	2,200
Emilia Romagna	18s	1,400
Liguria	4b	1,100
Piedmont	8b	1,300
Sicily	7s	600
Campania	7s	500
Apulia	6s	500
Sardinia	2s	150
Abruzzo	1s	200
Calabria	1s	200

The AdP very quickly built up its own cultural identity with individual sections proudly flaunting their own logos and images of war. While the AdP as a whole was easily recognisable by a skull surrounded by a laurel wreath with a dagger in its teeth, and the motto '*A Noi*' (To us), the Directorate's logo was a dagger surrounded by an oak and laurel wreath. The *ivetavecchia* meanwhile didn't leave much to the imagination when choosing their banner – an axe smashing the *fasces* symbol! Although they did not have, nor want, their own uniform, the average AdP member preferred to dress in black sweaters, dark-grey trousers, with a red flower in their buttonholes. Their songs were direct and confrontational as they themselves were:

"Rintuzziamo la violenza/del fascismo mercenario./Tutti in armi!sul calvario/ dell'umana redenzion./Questa eterna giovinezza/si rinnova nella fede/ per un popolo che chiede/uguaglianza e libertà."

"We curb the violence/of the mercenary fascists/Everyone armed on the cavalry/of human redemption/This eternal youth/is renewed in the faith/for the people who demand equality and freedom."

The fascist offensive

The Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta, commenting on the massive factory occupations in northern Italy in September 1920 which involved 600,000 workers, predicted, "If we do not carry on to the end, we will pay with tears of blood for the fears we now instil in the bourgeoisie"... His words were to be prophetic, as both the PSI and CGL, instead of expanding the struggle from the factories into the community, collaborated with the state to return the workers to their jobs. It was from this moment onwards that the state moved on the offensive and Mussolini's 'revolutionary action' squads were supplied with enough arms to take to the streets.

Until the formation of the AdP, the fascists had things mostly their own way. Starting off with an attack on the town hall in Bologna, the fascist squads swept through the countryside like a scythe, undertaking 'punitive expeditions' against the 'red' villages. Following their success there, they began attacking the cities. Labour unions, the offices of co-operatives and leftist papers were destroyed in Trieste, Modena, and Florence within the first few months of 1921. As Rossi writes, they had "an immense advantage over the labour movement in its facilities for transportation and concentration... The fascists are generally without ties...they can live anywhere... The workers, on the contrary, are bound to their homes... This system gives the enemy every advantage: that of the offensive over the defensive, and that of mobile warfare over a war of position."[2]

However, by March 1921, there were growing signs of working class defence structures being put in place.

In Livorno, when a working class district (Borgo dei Cappucini) came under attack by the fascists, the whole neighbourhood mobilised against them, routing them from the town. In April, when the fascists launched an assault on one of the union centres (*Camero del Lavoro*), the workers held strike action on the 14th and surrounded the fascist squad, only for the army to rush to the fascists' defence. By July, the working class had created their own armed militia – the *Arditi del Popolo*.

Arditi del Popolo in action

The AdP first saw action in Piombino on 19 July 19, when they attacked a fascist meeting place and rounded up the fascists inside. When the Royal Guard tried to intervene, they too were forced to surrender. The AdP held the streets for a few days before the sheer size of police numbers forced them to withdraw.

In Sarzana, they went to the aid of the local population that had managed to capture one the fascists' most important leaders, Renato Ticci. When a squad of 500 fascists attempted to rescue Ticci, the AdP were there to force the fascists into the countryside. Twenty fascists (probably more) were killed and their squadron leader commented: "The squad, so long accustomed to defeating an enemy who nearly always ran away, or offered feeble resistance, could not, and did not know how to defend themselves."

Sell out

However, just as the AdP was building up the momentum on the streets, they were betrayed by the PSI who were more interested in signing a pact of non-aggression with the fascists; this at a time when the fascists were at their most vulnerable. Socialist militants were forced by their leadership to withdraw from the AdP, while the CGL union ordered its members to leave the organisation.

One union leader, Matteotti, confirmed the sell out in the union paper *Battaglia Sindicale*: "Stay at home: do not respond to provocations. Even silence, even cowardice, are sometimes heroic."

The communists went one step further by forming their own pure 'class conscious' squadrons thus decimating the movement further. According to Gramsci, "the tactic...corresponded to the need to prevent the party membership being controlled by a leadership that was not the party leadership". Quite soon, only 50 sections of 6000 members remained, supported both by the *Unione Sindicale Italiana* (USI) and the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* (UAI).

A number of these sections went into action again in September in Piombino when the fascists, who had burned down the offices of the PSI (the same organisation that had sold them out a month before), were intercepted by an anarchist patrol and forced to flee. Piombino was soon to become the nerve centre of the defence against fascism, defending itself against a further fascist onslaught in April 1922, before finally succumbing after one and a half days of fierce fighting, when the fascists, aided by the Royal Guard, were able to capture the offices of the USI.

In July 1922, the reformist general strike to defend 'civil liberties and the constitution' marked the final disaster for the labour movement, as the work stoppages were not, and could not be, accompanied by aggressive direct action. The fascists simply ran public services with scabs and made themselves masters of the streets. With the strike's collapse, the fascists mustered their forces to deal with the last remaining outposts of resistance, one of which, Livorno, succumbed to a force of 2,000 *squadristi*.

Conclusion

So what lessons can we today learn from the *Arditi del Popolo*? First of all, we need to learn the benefits of organisation. Like the AdP, we need to form local anti-fascist groups, operating autonomously in their own areas, but gelled together in a national network. These groups should not refrain from applying militant direct action tactics against the likes of the BNP; the only language the fascists understand. We need to avoid the path of reformism advocated by the recruiting agents of reformist parties like the SWP and destroy, once and for all, the nationalist myth that scapegoats our ethnic communities and which has allowed the likes of British Home Secretary, David Blunkett, and Irish Minister of Justice, John O' Donaghue, to hoodwink large sections of the working class into the belief the root of their socio-economic woes lies elsewhere. To do this, we need to tie the fascists' agenda to that of the state which supports it, and get across the message that fascism will only ever be destroyed once the state is smashed. Only a society run along the principles of anarcho-communism can ever hope to achieve this.

[1] Williams L. *Proletarian Order* 1975
[2] Rossi, A. *The Birth of Fascism* 1938

Thanks to Nestor McNab, for his help with translation of parts of this article.

Stormy Petrel pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti. Writings from the much-misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

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Clanship to *theme park*

It's the rich what gets the pleasure, the poor what gets the blame...

Scotland the Nation is a relatively recent idea, much the same as all other nations. The formation of this entity has taken place without the will or consent of the majority of people who live within the constructed borders.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area known as the Highlands & Islands was considered to contain people who were a species apart from the industrious citizens of Edinburgh, Glasgow and the agriculturally productive areas of the Central Belt, the North East and the lowlands. The lairds, clan chiefs and landlords of the peripheral areas had by this time thrown in their lot with the politically and economically powerful based in Glasgow, London and Edinburgh, thus breaking the symbolic links they held with their tenants as part of the same clan.

In the days of their forebears, of Culloden and Glencoe, they had been the foot-soldiers of plundering chieftains who needed cash to adopt the sophisticated and luxurious habits of the ruling class in more 'advanced' areas. Industrialisation and agronomic agricultural rationalisation meant that the people of the Highlands and Islands became either surplus to requirements or fodder for the armies, factories and mines that made and protected the wealth of Empire.

During the height of the Potato Famine (1846-55), stirred by the romanticisation of the Highlands, Prince Albert wanted to build a fairy tale castle in this wild and mysterious land. He managed to persuade the Government to pay for his folly and his holiday home was built. The cost of labour for the enterprise was pleasingly low; with starvation and eviction rampant throughout the area, people were willing to work eight hours a day for a pound and a half of meal. Meanwhile, the fantastically rich Duke and Duchess of Sutherland were hosting a fundraising visit at Dunrobin Castle for Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Beecher Stowe's visit was a coup for the fashionable Duchess who led the upper class craze in Britain for the emancipation of American slaves. Nobody mentioned the irony that the Duke was currently evicting and starving thousands of his tenants whose lives in many ways were just as unbearable as the lives of plantation slaves in America.

The dismissal, abuse and exploitation of the people who live in Scotland continues today. We exist in a theme park for the rich and famous – from Madonna to Al Fayed. Our recently bestowed parliament is just as answerable to the UK Treasury, the Labour Party and their business cronies as any other Government department, despite their smug glorying in giving the elderly the basic minimum they ought to expect in any 'civilised' society. The Nationalists up here would still be as much a part of a corrupt and destructive global system of capital. Meanwhile, the Socialists have a prescriptive Bible interpreted through the Word of Marx via demagogues and polit-pin-ups whose views are stone writ LAW.

The political system in which all our 'democratic' choices are placed is merely the servant and social architect of capitalism. This economic *fait accompli*, this Darwinian proof of profit, survival of the fittest, puts the majority, the surplus population, the poor, the hungry and the powerless on the road to extinction. That road is lined with media images and dreams of wealth and satisfaction just out of reach, so we walk on without wondering where we're headed. Unless Tommy Sheridan can turn Scotland into the Cuba of the North, or until the Nats can persuade Europe to give them a 'Setting up an Independent State' grant, we're headed along extinction alley.

We might alter the path, break through the images and myths and join with our fellow workers, learners, long-minded ones around the globe and begin to find means of working, learning, thinking and sharing together as free individuals with our own visions and dreams to guide us, and our own and shared experiences and flexibilities to get us there.

Think about it. Where would you like to live: a consumerist theme park where you serve an assigned role, or a safe, peaceful, infinitely varied and beautiful planet where you live as you choose, a valued autonomous individual?

The prison industrial *complex*

Any study of the prison industrial complex in America quickly reveals that forces with a financial interest in a big prison population have helped to cause and perpetuate the prison boom.

The American state holds two million people in prison on any given day – four times the number in 1980 – because there's money in it. This represents the highest per capita incarceration rate in the history of the world. In 1995 alone, 150 new US prisons were built and filled.

The prison industrial complex is rapidly becoming an essential component of the US economy. More than five million people are behind bars, on parole, probation, or under other supervision by the criminal justice system. The influence of the prison industrial complex penetrates deep into the political and social life of America. Legislators pass harsh sentencing laws virtually written by shadowy prison corporations – like the Corrections Corporation of America – who endlessly lobby for tough laws and the privatisation of prisons. The prison guards' union sponsors candidates who support tough laws and the economic exploitation of prisoners in the name of rehabilitation. Police departments base part of their budgeting on the proceeds from drug-related arrests. Thousands of people go to prison, or stay there longer, in the pursuit of profit.

Some commentators point to the disproportionate imprisonment of blacks and Latinos and declare prisons a modern form of slavery: this is a similar criticism to that of the Black Panther Party, who argue that racial minorities in America are an internal colony, a pool of downtrodden, second-class citizens valued only for the low-wage labour they supply.

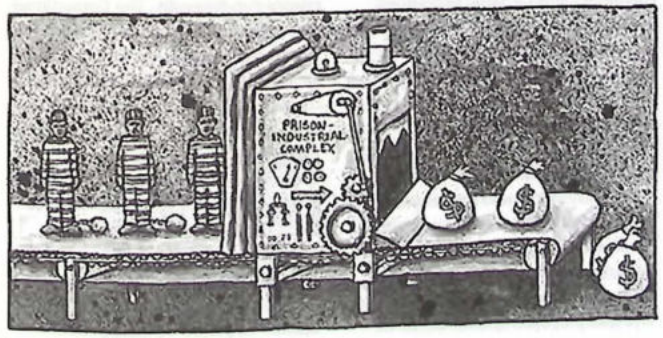
Prisons are big business

Prisons are becoming big business in four ways. Firstly, state correctional departments are turning their prisons into factories. Secondly, corporations are forming partnerships with prison authorities to provide goods and services for their customers. Thirdly, prisoners are increasingly seen as a captive market (literally) that can be exploited as consumers. Lastly, the prison regime is increasingly being colonised by the corporations, as justice is privatised.

Back to the farm

The industrialisation of the prison system is increasingly common. One example is the California Prison Industry Authority, set up in 1983. A semi-autonomous state agency, the PIA uses inmate labour to manufacture a wide variety of products that are sold to state agencies such as the Department of Corrections (CDC), the Department of Motor Vehicles, state hospitals and California State University.

About 7,000 prisoners, in 23 of California's 30 prisons, sand and upholster furniture, grind eyeglass lenses, and sew shirts and jeans. Inmate workers butcher beef and make hamburgers at the PIA's meat processing plants. The PIA's labour costs are extremely low (obviously) and the PIA is not required to pay holiday pay or provide for industrial injuries, sick leave, health insurance or other benefits. The PIA pays rent to the Department of Corrections for factory and warehouse space at prices well below market rates and the PIA pays no local, state or federal income taxes. State agencies are required by law to buy from the PIA and abuse of this monopoly is endemic.



The PIA claims that inmates learn

valuable skills that reduce re-offending, while producing valuable products that lower public spending. These arguments are used to justify massive spending on prisons in California, about £5bn a year, or 18% of the state budget (compared to only $4.4bn spent on California's schools). Even so, audits show that the PIA lost over $33m up to 1996, overcharged customers by $12m and did little to reduce re-offending rates.

Prisons are also a leading rural growth industry. With traditional agriculture being pushed aside by agribusiness, many rural American communities are facing hard times. Economically depressed areas are falling over each other to secure a prison facility of their own.

Prison labour is like a pot of gold.

Service at a price

For private business, prison labour is like a pot of gold. No strikes. No union organising. No unemployment insurance or industrial injury payments. No language problem unlike investing abroad. New leviathan prisons are being built with thousands of eerie acres of factories inside the walls. Prisoners do data entry for Chevron, make telephone reservations for TWA, raise hogs, shovel manure, make circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds and lingerie for Victoria's Secret – all at a fraction of the cost of 'free labour'.

Prison industries often directly compete with private industry. Small furniture manufacturers complain they are being driven out of business by prison companies that pay around 25 cents per hour and have the inside track on Government contracts. In one case, US Technologies sold its electronics plant in Austin, Texas, making 150 workers unemployed. Six week later, the electronics plant reopened in a nearby prison.

The criminal must pay

Prisoners are both captive workers and captive consumers. The major

telecomms corporations, AT&T and Bell, make big profits out of prisoners. The two million inmates in the US are ideal customers: phone calls are one of their few links to the outside world. Most of their calls must be made collect and they are in no position to switch to long-distance carriers.

A pay phone at a prison can generate as much as $15,000 a year – about five times the revenue of a typical pay phone on the street. It is estimated that inmate calls generate $1bn or more in revenues each year. The business is so lucrative that one company, MCI, installed its inmate phone service, Maximum Security, throughout the California prison system at no charge. As part of the deal, it offered the California Department of Corrections a 32% share of all the revenues. MCI Maximum Security and North American Intelecom have both been caught overcharging for calls made by inmates. And prisons are beginning to charge inmates for basic necessities from medical care to toilet paper or to use the law library. Many states are now charging 'room and board': Berks County jail in Pennsylvania charges inmates $10 a day.

Private money, private justice

Like the military/industrial complex, the prison industrial complex is an interweaving of private business and Government interests. Its public rationale is the fight against crime. Its two-fold purpose is profit and social control. Fear of crime and the demonisation of criminals serve a similar ideological purpose: to justify the use of tax dollars for the repression and incarceration of a growing percentage of the population. Though it is serial killers and rapists who cause headlines, most of those locked up are poor people who commit non-violent crimes out of economic need. Still, the building and maintenance of prisons is big business and a change of policy would hit profits. Investment houses, construction companies, architects, and support services such as food, medical, transportation and furniture all stand to profit by prison expansion.

Three strikes? Not even one!

These trends have been accelerated by the explosive growth in private prison companies. The rationale for privatisation is that Government monopolies, such as old-fashioned departments of corrections, are wasteful and inefficient, and the private sector, through competition for contracts, can provide much better service at a much lower cost. Like PFI in Britain – inspired by the prison-building programme in America – a private company will either run the prison for a Government agency, or build and operate its own. Private prisons are built and run more cheaply than state prisons but not because the private sector is more efficient: most of the savings come from the use of non-union labour.

Today, at least 27 states make use of private prisons and approximately 90,000 inmates are being held in prisons run for profit. The Correctional Corporation of America, one of the largest private prison owners, already operates internationally, with more than 48 facilities in 11 states, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and Australia. Under contract by Government to run jails and prisons, and paid a fixed sum per prisoner, the profit motive mandates that these firms operate as cheaply as possible.

Correctional officers in private prisons usually earn lower wages than officers employed by state prisons, while receiving fewer benefits and no pension. Prison owners are also raking in billions by cutting corners. Substandard diets, extreme overcrowding and abuse by poorly-trained personnel have all been routinely documented. It is here that capitalist business principles take over and begin to distort the ugly processes of law-making, arrest, trial and punishment.

Not even the roads are safe

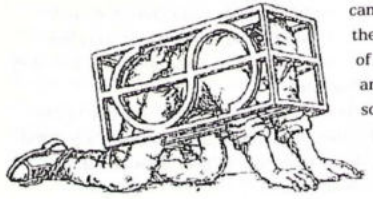
Private companies transport thousands of inmates across the United States every day with minimal oversight. Federal regulations concerning the interstate shipment of cattle are much stricter than those concerning the shipment of prisoners.

The firms save money by employing non-union guards and making multiple pickups and deliveries on each trip. Prisoners may spend as long as a month on the road, visiting dozens of states, sitting for days in the backs of old station wagons and vans, locked up alongside defendants awaiting trial and offenders on their way to prison.

The turnover rate among the transport guards and drivers is high; the pay is relatively low; and training for the job rarely lasts more than a week. Violent criminals are being shipped from state to state in the custody of people ill-equipped to deal with them.

America's first line of defence – against itself

As the Cold War winds down, defence industry giants like Westinghouse are lobbying Washington for their share of the domestic law enforcement market. The corporations are moving into every aspect of law enforcement, often offering bribes and inducements to Government agencies in exchange for lucrative contracts.



Since 1980, spending on corrections at the local, state, and federal levels has increased about fivefold. What was once a niche business for a handful of companies has become a multibillion-dollar industry with its own trade shows and conventions, websites, mail-order catalogues and direct-marketing campaigns.

The prison-industrial complex now includes some of the nation's largest architecture and construction firms, Wall Street investment banks that handle prison bond issues and invest in private prisons, plumbing, catering and health-care companies. As the prison industry has grown, the line between public and private interests has blurred. Prison service officials find lucrative employment with firms that supply the prison industry.

The prison-industrial complex now includes some of the nation's largest firms.

The flight of capital

The anti-globalisation movement has become wise to the fact that capital flows to wherever it can make most profit, often to the hurt of the people who have helped it grow rich and powerful. It rails against sweatshops in Thailand and Indonesia but ignores the internal colonies on its own doorstep.

The American state wages a half-hearted war against drug production in the Third World. Why? Because the financial interests of major corporations – donating millions to right-wing politicians and their campaigns – have a vested interest in the arrest and punishment of millions of Americans of colour for drug use and possession. Public policy has, as so often in America's past, become the plaything of private interests.

Capitalism is continually forced to seek ways to intensify exploitation. Casualisation and flexibilisation run parallel to each other, whether in the prison-factories of Tennessee or factory-prisons of China, defended by a fearsome system of violent repression and punishment in America and abroad.

Prisoners are fighting back with strikes and union-inspired militancy. But until the dispossessed workers of America can find common cause with the millions of working class people forced to labour as virtual slaves in the rural gulags of the penal system, nothing will change.

For some, poverty is the prison, for others mindless consumption. For the rest, there is always the prison-industrial complex – and 25c an hour.

Subvertisement

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Since 1996, Haven Distribution has been supplying free educational literature to various prisoners in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

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For a copy of our catalogue, we request that prisoners send an SAE or 2nd class stamp. If prisoners request specific titles which are not in our catalogue, we will endeavour to obtain them.

Haven Distribution exists on a shoestring budget and is run voluntarily. It is an essential service for prisoners. If you can afford a donation or a monthly standing order, it would be appreciated (especially as funds are running low).

Haven Distribution, 27 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1 3XX.

The *Zazous*

A challenge to Nazi-Vichy rule – the French Zazous.

In 1940, the Nazis had occupied France. The Vichy regime, in collaboration with the Nazis and fascist itself in policies and outlook, had an ultra-conservative morality and started to use a whole range of laws against a youth that was restless and disenchanted.

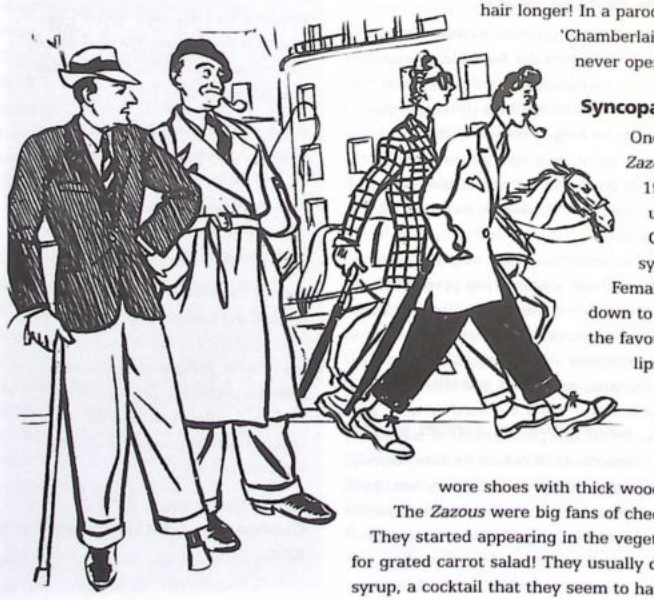
In Paris, young people started meeting in cafés, passing their time mocking the politics of the time. This spontaneous development was a sharp response to the deadening effect on society of the Nazi-Vichy rule. They met in cinemas, in the cellar clubs and at parties arranged at short notice.

These young people, who called themselves *Zazous*, were to be found throughout France, but were most concentrated in Paris. The two most important meeting places of the *Zazous* were the terrace of the Pam Pam café on the Champs Elysees and the Boul'Mich (the Boulevard Saint-Michel near the Sorbonne).

The *Zazous* of the Champs Elysees came from a more middle class background and were older than the *Zazous* of the Latin Quarter. The Champs Elysees *Zazous* were easily recognisable on the terrace of the Pam Pam and took afternoon bike rides in the Bois de Boulogne. In the Latin Quarter, the *Zazous* met in the cellar clubs of Dupont-Latin or the Capoulade.

The male *Zazous* wore extra large jackets, which hung down to their knees and which were fitted out with many pockets and often several half-belts. The amount of material used was a direct comment on Government decrees on the rationing of clothing material. Their trousers were narrow, gathered at the waist, and so were their ties, which were cotton or heavy wool. The shirt collars were high and kept in place by a horizontal pin. They liked thick-soled suede shoes, with white or brightly-coloured socks. Their hairstyles were greased and long.

In fact, after the Government decree of 1942, which authorised the collection of hair from barber-shops to be made into slippers, they grew their hair longer! In a parody of Englishness they carried formal 'Chamberlain' umbrellas, always neatly furled, and never opened in spite of rainy weather.



Syncopated

One fascist magazine commented on the male *Zazou*: "Here is the specimen of Ultra Swing 1941: hair hanging down to the neck, teased up into an untidy quiff, little moustache à la Clark Gable... shoes with too-thick soles, syncopated walk."

Female *Zazous* wore their hair in curls falling down to their shoulders, or in braids. Blonde was the favourite colour, and they wore bright red lipstick, as well as sunglasses, also favoured by some male *Zazous*. They wore jackets with extremely wide shoulders and short, pleated skirts. Their stockings were striped or sometimes net, and they wore shoes with thick wooden soles.

The *Zazous* were big fans of checkered patterns, on jacket, skirt or brolly. They started appearing in the vegetarian restaurants and developed a passion for grated carrot salad! They usually drank fruit juice or beer with grenadine syrup, a cocktail that they seem to have invented.

The *Zazous* were directly inspired by jazz and swing music. A healthy, black jazz scene had sprung up in Montmartre in the inter-war years. Black Americans felt freer in Paris than they did back home, and the home-grown jazz scene was greatly reinforced by this emigration. Manouche Gypsy musicians like Django Reinhardt started playing swinging jazz music in the Paris clubs.

The *Zazous* probably got their name from a line in a song – *Zah Zuh Zah* by the black jazz musician Cab Calloway, famous for his *Minnie the Moocher*. A French crooner popular with the *Zazous*, Johnny Hess, also had a song, *Je suis swing*, in early 1942, in which he sung the lines "Za zou, za zou, za zou, za zou ze". An associate of the *Zazous*, the anarchist singer-songwriter, jazz trumpeter, poet and novelist Boris Vian was also extremely fond of z words in his work! The long drape jacket was also copied from zootsuits worn by the likes of Calloway.

"The Zazous were very obviously detested by the Nazis, who on the other side of the Rhine, had since a long time decimated the German cultural avante garde, forbidden jazz and all visible signs of... degenerations of Germanic culture..." (Pierre Seel, who, as a young *Zazou*, was deported to a German concentration camp because of his homosexuality.)

When the yellow star was forced on Jews, non-Jews who objected began to wear yellow stars with 'Buddhist', 'Goy' (Gentile) or 'Victory'. Some *Zazous* took this up, with '*Zazou*' written below the star. When the French Jews were removed from the scene, the Vichy regime and their Nazi masters turned on the *Zazous*.

Vichy had started 'Youth Worksites' in July 1940, in an attempt to indoctrinate French youth. The same year, they set up a Ministry of Youth. They saw the *Zazous* as a rival and dangerous influence on youth. By 1942, Vichy high-ups realised that the national revival that they hoped would be carried out by young people under their guidance was seriously affected by widespread rejection of the patriotism, work ethic, self-denial, asceticism and masculinity this called for. The *Zazous* were degenerate and dandified and so weren't a lot of these scum obviously Jews?

The witch-hunt begins

In 1940, 78 anti-*Zazou* articles were published in the press, as opposed to nine in 1941 and 38 in 1943. The Vichy papers deplored the moral turpitude and decadence that was affecting French morality. *Zazous* were seen as work-shy, egotistical and Judeo-Gaullist shirkers.

Soon, round-ups began in bars and *Zazous* were beaten on the street. They became Enemy Number One of the fascist youth organisation *Jeunesse populaire français*. "Scalp the *Zazous*!" became their slogan. Squads of young JPF fascists armed with hairclippers attacked *Zazous*. Many were arrested and sent to the countryside to work on the harvest.

At this point the *Zazous* went underground, holing up in their dance halls and basement clubs. With the Liberation of Paris it appears some *Zazous* joined in the armed combat to drive out the Nazis – certainly they had a few scores to settle. But the *Zazous* were suspected by the official Communist resistance of having a "couldn't give a fuck" attitude to the war in general.

The *Zazous* were numbered in the hundreds rather than thousands and were generally between 17 and 20. There were *Zazous* from all classes but with apparently similar outlooks. Working class *Zazous* used theft of cloth and black market activities to get their outfits, sometimes stitching their own clothes. Some of the more bohemian *Zazous* in the Latin Quarter varied the outfit, with sheepskin jackets and multicoloured scarves. It was their ironic and sarcastic comments on the Nazi/Vichy rulers, their dandyism and hedonism, their suspicion of the work ethic and their love of 'decadent' jazz that distinguished them as one of the prototype youth movements questioning capitalist society.

What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

Though they did not suffer like their contemporaries in Germany, the working class Edelweiss Pirates, some of whom were hanged by the Nazis (see a previous article in *Organise!* for an in-depth article), nevertheless, in a society of widespread complicity and acquiescence, their stand was courageous and trail-blazing.

***Direct Action: Memoirs of an Urban Guerrilla* by Ann Hansen**
ISBN 1-896357-40-7 2002
AK Press Distribution, 674-A 23rd St, Oakland, California 94612-1163
www.akpress.org
Reviewed by Brian Burch

No matter what has happened in the last 20 years, the defining moment of my political activist career was the bombing of Litton Industries.

The Litton Industries plant, in northwest Toronto, was where Canadian complicity in the arms race was more publicly revealed. In the factory on City View Drive, Canadian tax dollars were subsidising the production of the guidance system for the American air-launched cruise missile. For years, the Cruise Missile Conversion Project and various local expressions of the Alliance for Non-Violent Action, attempted to end Canadian involvement in the arms race.

In the fall of 1982, there was an upheaval in the resistance to manufacturing the tools of war – a bomb went off at Litton Industries, a bombing that the group Direct Action took responsibility for. The police took this opportunity to go after peace activists. Our homes and offices were raided. People were picked up off the street or out of movie theatres for questioning. False charges were laid to pressure people to name names. It was a fearful and formative time, one that is hard to realise was 20 years ago.

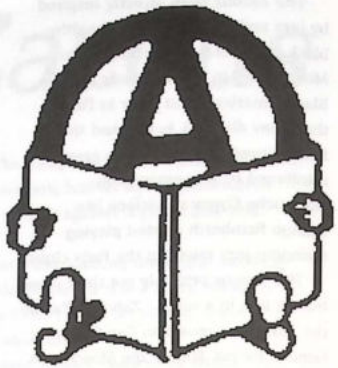
Ann Hansen was one of the members of Direct Action. Her book is a slightly fictionalised account of the history of Direct Action and the political realities of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Reading Direct Action, one gets a hint of Emma Goldman's *Living My Life*. There is a strong, personal narrative linked to a broader world of movements for positive and compassionate social transformation. Finding out that Ann Hansen had not read *Living My Life* was a surprise. Nonetheless, Direct Action is in the tradition of *Living My Life* – an open reflection on personal experiences, living in a revolutionary milieu.

I confess that my first intent was to see if I was mentioned by name; and I was. What struck home the most was the short retelling of being picked up by police, who were driving an unmarked car. This is, to me, symbolic of one of the less-talked-about realities in the aftermath of the bombing of Litton: the effects on the lives of people unconnected to the bombing. For about two years, there was a strong sense of fear in the lives of a number of activists wondering about what would happen next. Who would have their home raided? Who would face a series of harassing charges? Would one of us be charged because the police need to charge someone?

What is revealed throughout the book is a real militant compassion. Ann Hansen is good at portraying the range of issues that the five participants in Direct Action had attempted to address. There was not a sudden leap from a desire for social change to a participation in urban guerrilla warfare. Rather, we share a process that helps to reveal why people who were deeply committed to a just and ecologically-sound world would accept the risks of both their freedom and lives and the lives of others as a step towards their ideals bearing fruit.

Some of the biographical details of Ann Hansen were a surprise. The tapestry of relationships she was a part of was quite complex. Some were intensely emotional, indicating a capacity for love that I think also underlies her own willingness to take major personal risks in order to make life better for others.

While *Direct Action* is a personal statement, it is also an historical document. Twenty years ago, revolution was not merely an advertising concept. Like in the period when the Weather Underground arose, there were massive and public demands for radical social transformation. In Nicaragua and El Salvador, there were massive, popular revolts against US-backed regimes. In Canada, leaders of unions and churches were participating in demonstrations that were definitively anti-capitalist and anti-militarist. There was enthusiasm as victories could be pointed to – such as reproductive freedom – that had been run through mass, non-violent resistance to unjust laws. So, if there were roadblocks to change, was it unreasonable to want to remove the roadblocks? If immediate harm was going to occur – such as building weapons for the US military or



destroying the ecosystem or exploiting women's sexuality – was it unreasonable for people to try to sabotage the actual places where harm was occurring?

Direct Action looks at this reality and helps to question it. In the light of a strong anti-globalisation movement and the US response to the events of September 11th, I think that this is an essential book to read and reflect upon. We are in a world where the police have recently been given extreme powers to crack down on dissent. If nothing else, this book will encourage serious thought about how to effectively resist, while considering the consequences of resistance.

Anarchist Communist Editions

Available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, E1 7QX.

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Spontaneity or organisation

Dear *Organise!*

Comrades, *Organise!* seems to accuse 'Trot' and Marxist organisations of being 'elitist' and 'hierarchical' in character. Against the supposed idea that power structures emerge out of ideology, you counter spontaneity. But spontaneity seems to largely consist of waiting for as large a section of the class to move and merely running alongside the movement without corrupting it with mere 'theory' and 'perspectives', treating each strike or demonstration in glorious isolation, and above all, doing nothing to sully the reformist illusions of those taking part.

You are in the same danger as Garcia Lorca, who shed his one-time Marxism and his pretence at being a revolutionary to traipse behind the Argentine bourgeoisie, just as workers were engaging in their fiercest battles. Then, after a general strike that he and the union bureaucrats helped betray, he blamed the workers for failing 'spontaneously' to call for or build workers' councils as organs of power. But then, 'spontaneist' opportunists always end up blaming the workers.

The loop in which CND has got itself so profoundly stuck rests on the illusion that 'our' rulers can be peaceably persuaded to part with their massive stockpiles of armaments. You have eco-reformists demonstrating against climate-change and lobbying for traffic reduction. Even this seems too 'dogmatic' and 'political' for some levels of 'spontaneity' such as the 'non-sectarian', 'rank-and-file' call to 'Make the union leaders act!' But the bureaucrats act according to their own agenda.

We want to prevent redundancies with a sliding wage scale with a heavily reduced hours with no loss of pay, but these demands run along with plant occupation, and with genuine democratic workers' control to make sure that happens, re-tooling production away from munitions and yet more cars to items more compatible with the kind of world we want to build. The bureaucrats want to rope us into a chauvinist and classless alliance with 'our' patriotic bosses, in the name of 'competitiveness', to defend 'our' industries and probably insisting on state subsidies to cover the bosses' losses while freeing them from 'inconvenient' environmental regulations or workers' rights.

It is one matter if the ANL were to make a revolutionary turn in marking its 'independence' from the SWP, but the 'Don't Vote Nazi!' slogan in the Isle of Dogs election was worse than useless in that it threw the residents back on the establishment parties which have so clearly failed them and it would seem too 'dogmatic', according to the writers of *Organise!*, to insist on a revolutionary alternative on the ground.

While the residents of Asian descent in Brick Lane most needed defence and support it was when the ANL was having its bean feast in Brixton.

The way I heard it, the Bakunin/Marx split was not about the role of the state but that Bakunin thought the 'spontaneous' form of struggle to be self-sufficient, without the need to expose the masses to political involvement. The 'Trots' seem fairly consistent but the 'anarchists' seem divided as to whether the working-class in the metropolitan countries would act in their own liberation or wait for the heartlands of capital to be encircled by third-world and peasant revolt.

Some rare individuals under specific circumstances may spontaneously ignite like a candle and burn to ashes, while leaving the room where this happens largely untouched, and a spontaneous outburst of outrage may ignite a riot which burns out as soon, but never a revolution which needs ruthless strategy, planning and a lot of bloody hard work. But once workers are consciously aware of their real collective strength then they are unstoppable.

John Johnson

Editors reply: John's description of working class spontaneity would indeed be a recipe for back and doing nothing or allowing well-organised bureaucracies (including 'left' and 'revolutionary' parties) to set the agenda, if it truly represented our thoughts on the issue. As revolutionaries, we are both involved in daily struggle and putting forward ideas about how struggle can be taken forward. Our approach, then, is radically different to either the stand-around-waiting or futile-explosion role he paints for us. Perhaps these quotes from *The Role of The Revolutionary Organisation*,

one of our older, but still popular, works will explain our position:

"The concept of working class spontaneity has been distorted and misunderstood for too long. We do not take the 'unhistorical' attitude that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no memory of or connection with previous struggles and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years to clarify and co-ordinate struggles in the working class greatly helps the revolutionary process. Working class spontaneity is the ability of that class to take direct action on its own behalf and to develop new forms of struggle and organisation. This happens in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have formed committees and councils independent of 'vanguards'.... The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of and sometimes against the urgings of the revolutionary elite. The experiences of working class life constantly lead to ideas and actions which question the established order. At the same time, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of working class solidarity through its control of the media and education and by perpetuating racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness. The working class is neither an amorphous mass nor, at the moment, solid and united, conscious of itself and its power. The anarchist revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that the only possible working class revolution is one where people use mass action to smash the apparatus of the ruling class (the police, courts,

bureaucracy etc) and the class itself. Any other revolution leads only to the formation of a new ruling class."

Members of the Anarchist Federation are a part of the working class which is consciously involved in struggle and willing to explore the lessons of history and of current political struggle with workers in our common struggle for freedom. We are not 'above' the workers, nor 'in advance' of the working class. We shape the struggle by being involved in it, but are also shaped by the ideas and experiences of other people. Revolution is not the 'gift' of the revolutionary party to the people. It is the transformation of social and economic relations by the people themselves.

Dear *Organise!*

The nit-picking of your correspondent, Sebastian Melmoth (Organise! #58) over the revolutionary contributions of Phoolan Devi, Alfredo Bonnano and Murray Bookchin is sadly typical of many armchair 'anarchist' critics of the age.

Sure, none of the above-mentioned trio are/were anarchist 'saints', but at least they got up off their arses and, in two cases, challenged the system and the status quo head on; actions which cost Phoolan Devi her life and Bonnano long years of imprisonment. And I would somehow hazard a guess that through six decades of writing in opposition to capitalism from a libertarian perspective, Murray Bookchin has introduced more people to anarchism than has the 'right-on' whinging of those quick to draw attention to his failings.

Small wonder 'revolutionary anarchism' makes only stunted progress, when we are encouraged only to acknowledge the so-called purists, the safely dead and a mythical, romanticised entity whose continuing inertia is constantly blocking the way to evolve.

For Revolutionary Anarchism,
Frankie Dee.

Dear *Organise!*

Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) is Europe's largest contract animal testing laboratory. This means that they will effectively test anything for anybody – agrochemicals, plastics, food colourings...

The campaign against HLS started in 1997, when a documentary was screened showing, among other things, incredible amounts of animal cruelty. Since then, customers, shareholders and suppliers of HLS have systematically been targeted with an above-ground campaign including among other tactics: office occupations, banner drops, lock-ons.

As well as this, the ALF has been carrying out underground activities, such as liberating animals from suppliers, sinking the private yacht of a Bank of New York director and causing untold economic damage to anyone involved in HLS. To date, scores of customers and shareholders have deserted the sinking ship that is HLS.

The campaign against HLS focuses largely on customers and shareholders etc, such as Shell, Monsanto, Aventis, Glaxo SmithKline and other multinational pharmaceutical companies and banks who are also responsible for human and ecological genocide. Some of these customers are known to have had products tested on prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. Dow, one of HLS's customers produces Agent Orange, the defoliator used in Vietnam which is still causing birth defects in Vietnamese children.

The idea of anarchy (at least as far as I see it) is freedom and liberty. Does it matter if an individual is black, white, female, male, has skin, feathers or fur? As long as a living individual can feel pain, they do not deserve to have it needlessly inflicted. To say we believe in equality and justice for all, but we will still treat animals like shit, seems very strange indeed; not a society that I am willing to be part of.

We are all aware of the extent to which multinationals will lie to keep the money flowing. This does not stop with animal testing. Most major medical advances are NOT a result of animal testing. Penicillin was discovered by chance when spores of Penicillium Notatum floated in through Fleming's window and started destroying cell tissue in an unwashed petri dish. Anaesthesia was discovered by a bunch of doctors who took to inhaling different gasses after dinner.

Animal testing, on the other hand, has conclusively proved that lemon juice is lethal, asbestos is safe and that Thalidomide is a wonder drug! You can prove anything you want depending on which animal you choose to use. These results are simply not safe to be applied to humans. Proctor and Gamble tested an artificial musk on rats, all of which died. The product was put on the market anyway with the reassurance that the results were irrelevant, as rats are not the same as humans!

Of course, from the workers angle, there will be people who are laid off when HLS closes. But these are the same type of people who would have lost their jobs when Nazi death camps were destroyed. Does a 'normal' person really want to cut apart living animals? Undercover footage has shown workers at Huntingdon Life Sciences punching beagle puppies in the face, taunting animals as they are killed, and ripping open a live monkey without anaesthetic. These are not the kind of people who deserve support and job security.

In a fair world, we would be looking for safe medicines which have the purpose of saving lives, not taking them. This is the aim of those fighting against HLS. We are not against medicine, we are against animal abuse, torture and murder.

For more information on how to help close down HLS, please contact Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, SHAC, PO Box 381, Cheltenham, Glos, GL50 1YN. Tel: 0845 4580630. Email: info@shac.net web: www.shac.net

Ito Noe

Continued from back page

Ito was well aware of the consequences of being an anarchist in Japan at that time. In 1911, Kotoku Shusui, the leading woman anarchist, Kanno Suga, and ten other anarchists were framed on flimsy charges of attempting to kill the Emperor and subsequently executed.

In his autobiography, Bertrand Russell recounts how he met Ito Noe in Japan in 1921. "She was young and beautiful... Dora [Bertrand Russell's wife] said to her: "Are you not afraid that the authorities will do something to you?" She drew her hand across her throat, and said, "I know they will sooner or later".

Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF?
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I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

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Revolutionary portraits

Ito Noe

Ito Noe was a courageous Japanese woman who broke with her social conditioning and became a champion of both women's liberation and anarchism.

We continue our series, 'Revolutionary Portraits' on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Ito was born in 1895, to a family of landed aristocracy, on the southern island of Kyushu. After graduating from Ueno Girls High School, she was forced against her will into an arranged marriage in her native village. She soon ran away to Tokyo.

In Tokyo, women had been developing progressive ideas since the 1870s. Hiratsuka Raicho founded the *Seitosha* (Blue Stocking Society) and brought out its magazine *Seito (Blue* Stocking) which gave space to women to develop their literary, aesthetic and political capabilities. Ito joined this group in 1913, at the age of 18, and became one of its editors from 1915 to 1916. Skilled in several languages, including English, she translated articles by the anarchist, Emma Goldman, on the situation of women.

Ito later married the writer Tsuji Jun (1884-1944), who had taught her at school in 1912, but left him to have a passionate love affair with the charismatic anarchist firebrand Osugi Sakae in 1916.

Free love

Ito and Osugi believed in the concepts of free love. Osugi at this time was conducting an affair with the leading woman anarchist, Ichiko Kamachiko. Unfortunately, the theoretical concepts of free love collided with human jealousy and Kamachika attacked Osugi with a knife and severely wounded him. The mass media used this incident to attack Ito, Osugi and Kamachika for their 'immorality' and the anarchist movement in general. This caused problems in the anarchist group in which Ito and Osugi were involved and many comrades split with them.

Ito worked with Osugi in promoting the anarchist movement, as well as developing her ideas on women's liberation. She helped found the socialist women's group *Sekirankai* in 1921. She produced over 80 articles for different publications, as well as translating the work of European anarchists like Kropotkin and Goldman. In addition, she produced several autobiographical novels, which charted her life from adolescence, through breaking with tradition, to reaching her emancipated and anarchist outlook. They included *Zatsuon* (Noises) in 1916 at the age of 21, and *Tenki* (Turning Point) in 1918. In 1919, with Osugi, Wada Kyutaro and Kondo Kenji, she brought out the first *Rodo Undo* (Labour Movement) magazine, which sought to link anarchism to the industrial working class and many branches of an organisation with the same name were set up.

Earthquake

Two years later, in September 1923, shortly after the birth of her seventh child, the Great Kanto Earthquake hit Japan.

As often happens in the aftermath of an earthquake, many fires broke out and more people were killed by these than by the quake. A total of 100,000 died and as many as two million were left homeless.

Rumours began to spread, encouraged by the authorities, that various 'unpopular' groups were responsible for starting fires and causing other mischief to aggravate the situation. As a result, mobs attacked many immigrant Korean and Chinese workers, and the police used the opportunity to murder anarchist and socialist militants. Thousands were killed. Among them were ten socialists in Kameido in Tokyo, as well as Ito Noe, Sakae Osugi and his six-year old nephew, Tachebana Munekazu. They were taken into custody on 16 September and all were beaten and strangled in the cells of the dreaded Kempei-tai secret police. Osugi had been No 1 on their death list for a long time.

Several days later, the bodies were found in a well, where they had been left to decompose. At the trial which followed the discovery of the murderer, a secret policeman, Amakasu Masahiko, on orders from Emperor Hirohito, was given just ten years' gaol. Released by personal order of Hirohito, four years later, and assigned to 'special duties' in Manchuria, he finally committed suicide in 1945, before his crimes could be avenged by the many anarchists after his blood.

Earlier in 1924, Wada Kyutaro, a comrade of Ito and Osugi, had attempted to kill Fukuda Masataro, the general in charge of the military district where they had been murdered, who had passed on orders from Hirohito to the secret policeman.

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T/SOR/16/29

ORGANISE!

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

Price £1.50
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At war with Iraq

ISSUE 60
MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

XERXED

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF) and the Anarchist Federation Ireland. *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* three times a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first.

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in June 2003. All contributions should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk.

Acknowledgement: Most of the illustrations in this magazine are shamelessly ripped off from other magazines and web sites, however, the photographs generally come from the excellent Indymedia website. They can be viewed, along with much more at www.indymedia.org. We thoroughly recommend it.

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Back issues

Back issues of *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

Issue 19: The Poll Tax Rebellion
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Issue 59: The Sex Issue: What does sexual freedom mean?; Interview with a dominatrix; Sex workers and industrial organisation; Class Struggle in China; The *Ardititi del Popolo* (anti-fascism in Italy); The Prison Industrial Complex; The Zazous (French youth against the Nazis during the war)

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything, plus whatever else we can find lying around.

At war with *Iraq*

As we send Organise! *off to the printers, war has finally broken out*

The USA and Britain have launched their attack on Iraq. We expect this war to be over quickly, with minimum casualties for the USA and its allies, and at enormous human cost to the people of Iraq. The following pieces will necessarily be dated by the time you read them, however they are worth reading as they provide some background to this latest round of dominance games being played by the USA.

We now have to ask, "Who next?" This war is just part of the USA's attempt to reshape the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Certainly Colombia is in the firing line, maybe Iran, maybe even a 'democratic' coup in Saudi Arabia. Only time will tell. One thing they all have in common is enormous oil resources. We do predict that resistance from Iraq will continue, even when the formal war is over. How the USA and Britain will react to a steady trickle of body bags over the months to come is anyone's guess. Short of working class rebellion, we expect this to be the picture of the world for years to come.

The United States prepares for regime change

The State and the ruling class of the United States seem determined to carry out their war threats all around the planet. Whilst the US normally prefers to conquer new territories by the penetration of its capital, there is always the option of a follow-through with military domination if that fails. Other Western powers that wish to increase their influence now see the US in the ascendant. In the Persian Gulf, the chief obstacle to American domination is now Iraq. Up until recently, US interests meant that the Saddam regime was supported and armed. Today, the American boss class needs to sweep away the Saddam regime and establish a protectorate under its military control. If that regime is not dealt with, US capital will not have enough freedom of movement in the Gulf region.

To find a pretext to launch a war, the American ruling class has sought to use the United Nations weapons inspectors, but there have been problems with this, as their reports have not provided sufficient evidence for such an attack.

A series of ultimatums that Iraq cannot accept are to be used in the same way as the Rambouillet accord was used – as a pretext to smash what was left of ex-Yugoslavia.

Not only has the overthrow of the Saddam regime been decided but the USA has decided who to put in its place. This will consist of the Group of Four (the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the main Shiite opposition group, as well as the National Iraqi Accord) and the organisation of ex-military officers of the Baath regime (backed by the Central Intelligence Agency). US support to this Group of Four represents a policy change from support for the National Iraqi Congress, now considered insufficient to the task ahead. This itself points to a more aggressive American strategy, as all these armed groups are involved in smuggling and gangsterism.

The American effort to isolate Iraq has collapsed. Russia is owed vast amounts by Iraq and economic links between the two countries are estimated at billions. The Russian oil enterprises LUKOil and Zarubezhneft and the French company Total-Fina-Elf have major interests in Iraq. Iraq is currently working to reopen its oil pipelines towards the port of Ceyhan in Turkey and in constructing a new pipeline to Jordan and another towards Syria and Jordan. Other countries such as China, India, Indonesia and Vietnam have economic interests in Iraq. Iraq has the second biggest reserve of oil in the world.

The strategic position of Iraq in the Gulf and the reserves of gas and petrol close by in Central Asia mean that the domination of the region is crucial for US interests. As was admitted recently in the *Chicago Sun Times*: "Military victory is

anticipated inside the Bush administration as the tonic that will prompt corporation officers and private investors to unleash the American economy's dormant power. Although it is impolitic to say so, the fact that the United States will be sitting on a new major oil supply will stimulate the domestic economy. That puts a high premium on quickly gaining control of Iraq's oil wells before they can be torched – a major uncertainty in an otherwise strictly scripted scenario."

But there are deep divisions within the US administration on how this can be done. General Tommy Franks in the *Washington Post* predicted that 200,000 military would be needed and an invasion would incur heavy losses. The obstruction of US 'allies' like France and Germany have slowed the American offensive. The Russian ruling class, despite lying prostrate before US military power, is deeply opposed to any military attack on Iraq. Since November 2000, Iraq has preferred to use the Euro rather than the dollar for its oil transactions. In the meantime, the bombing by the US and its British ally has continued. From 17 December 1998 to 18 May 2002, warplanes carried out 38,504 raids and the bombing still continues. The US has systematically destroyed the Iraqi infrastructure.

At home in the USA, the government has acted rapidly to establish a more flagrant dictatorship of the ruling class and the industrial-military complex. The government no longer needs proof, trial or legal defence. It can put anyone on its territory, with or without citizenship, into its civil or military prisons. The recent arrest of Abdullah al-Mujahir accused of plotting a 'dirty' nuclear bomb demonstrates this, with still no evidence offered by the government. New legislation, like the proposed Patriot Act, will strengthen this.

The US government has revived its old Cold War propaganda and even that of the Second World War. The National Security Agency has launched a campaign with the motto "Loose lips sink ships". Indeed the US and British governments are attempting to re-launch 'anti-fascist' sentiment that proved so useful in gaining popular support for World War II, but with little success so far, as a dictator not even able to rule over the whole of Iraq hardly compares to a confident and expansionist Hitler. All restrictions on espionage and domestic surveillance have been lifted. A huge new bureaucracy is being created under the banner of the Department for Security of the Country, centralising every aspect of surveillance, of application of the law and of public security.

According to official statistics of the US government, foreign investment in the USA has plunged by 60% from 2000 to 2001. This shows the real crisis of confidence in the US economy, because foreign capital is searching for better dividends elsewhere. This is the biggest slump in the USA for more than 10 years. The US administration has to maintain the circulation of capital in the USA in the same way that it has to assure the control of the most important merchandise of capitalism: oil. The only option for the US boss class is war. Using war on terrorism as a pretext, the US administration has, and this is no exaggeration, declared war on the whole planet.

The realisation of this grim fact is an underlying and as yet not fully expressed factor within the huge anti-war movement that has affected so many countries around the world and which has spread to many sectors of society – with special reference to young people who are taking direct action in their schools and in the streets. So the anti-war movement should not be underestimated in a strategy for developing a revolutionary answer to the war. Hopefully, large numbers of people involved in this movement can become increasingly radicalised. The readiness to take direct action, the fact that a huge movement has emerged even before the war is officially declared, are positive factors.

What about Britain?

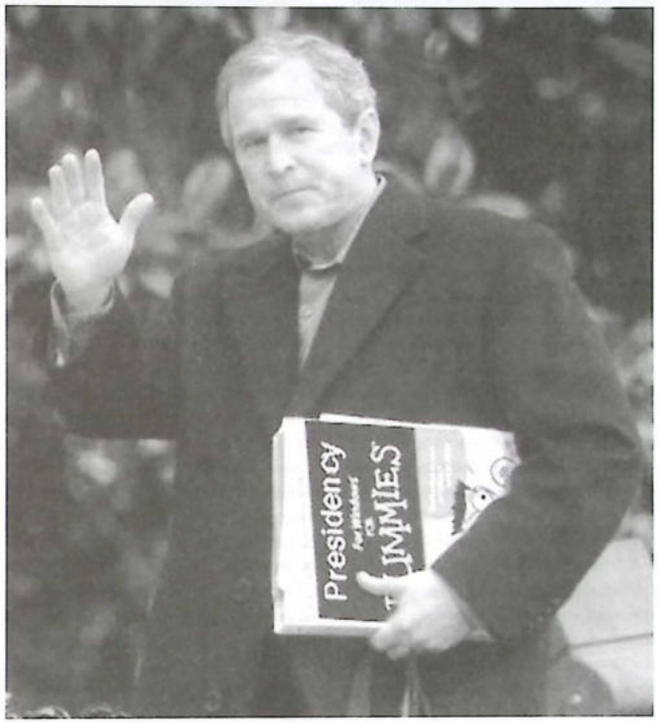
Why has the Blair regime sided with the US rather than with the Franco-German bloc? It is true that there are divisions within the British boss class over the war (this explains the favourable coverage given to the anti-war movement in some of the establishment media), but the bulk of the ruling class has traditionally allied itself with the US. The Conservative Party stands solid with Labour on the war, and the core of Labour is totally loyal and compliant. The bulk of the British establishment regards it as political suicide to break with their US allies.

The Liberal Democrats have marched into the ranks of the anti-war movement. But their stance and that of their leader Charles Kennedy is not anti-war as such. They take the side of the Franco-German bloc, and that section of the ruling class in Britain that sees the most fruitful way forward is to develop a strong European bloc in opposition to the dominant US bloc. Their emphasis is on gaining UN approval, and so legitimising a war with a larger percentage of the population. They – and France, Germany, Russia and China – would not be opposed to any war to further their own economic and strategic interests, if it was more politically effective. This would mean better thought-out military strategies that did not involve such mass opposition. Their role within the anti-war movement will have the long-term strategy of confusing and demoralising that movement.

In the long term, the US's aggressive foreign policy may be its epitaph as a dominant world power. Huge new movements are springing into life, partly based on previous mass mobilisations of the last 40 years. The mass movement of millions of working class women and men can yet halt the rush to war and barbarism. The key factors are a break with nationalism, with the chloroform of establishment media propaganda, and with the obstacle of dogmatic non-violent pacifism. There is a whole future to be won, and anarchists must prepare themselves to take a full part in helping this come about.

Oil

The following comes from a talk delivered by a member of the AF Ireland in Belfast in February:



The US Department of Energy announced at the beginning of this month that by 2025, US oil imports will account for perhaps 70% of total US domestic demand.[1] US oil deposits are becoming progressively depleted and many other non-OPEC fields are beginning to run dry. "This really means that the bulk of future supplies will have to come from the Gulf region".[2] Since Iraq has the second largest reserves of oil in the world after Saudi Arabia, it seems sensible to seize them, particularly now that Bush and Cheney are in the White House; both are former oil company executives, while Bush Snr. was founder, in 1954, of the Zapata Offshore Oil Company. Cheney, when president of the Halliburton Company of Houston, sold Saddam $23 billion dollars of oil field equipment.

In last April's *New Yorker*, the investigative reporter Nicholas Lemann wrote that Bush's most senior adviser, Condoleeza Rice, told him she had called together senior members of the National Security Council and asked them "to think about how to capitalise on these opportunities", which she compared with those of 1945-1947: the start of the Cold War." (John Pilger) "The Bush administration, intimately entwined with the global oil industry, is keen to pounce on Iraq's massive untapped reserves, the second biggest in the world after Saudi Arabia's. But France and Russia, who hold a power of veto on the UN Security Council, have billion-dollar contracts with Baghdad, which they fear will disappear in 'an oil grab by Washington', if America installs a successor to Saddam." (*The Observer*)

There are a number of interrelated issues here. Firstly, the profits of individual corporations are dependent on relations with the oil producing states. A diversification of oil production – opening up new sources of supply (such as that in Central Asia or by re-bringing Iraqi oil on to the open market) weakens the power of OPEC, the consortium of oil producing states, thereby strengthening the bargaining position of the corporations who purchase from them.

Furthermore, an increase in American military power in the area will naturally be used to benefit American-based corporations as opposed to, say, French ones. However, if it was just a matter of the interests of individual corporations or sectors of the economy, then market competition would compel them to, for short term reasons, do business with Iraq, irrespective of what regime is in power there; so secondly, and most importantly, the question is where does the profits which have been creamed off the backs of the working class in oil-producing areas end up? It can be re-invested in the world economic system dominated by elites in the West, as we can see in this extract on Saudi Arabia from the *Washington Post*: "Since the 1970s,

Saudi Arabia has shifted from its role as a large oil supplier to becoming the principal US ally and economic partner in the region. In the 1970s and 1980s, it bolstered the international banking system with its oil revenue Since 1981, US construction companies and arms suppliers have earned more than $50 billion in Saudi Arabia, according to the Congressional Research Service US. Investments in the country reached $4.8 billion in 2000, according to the Commerce Department. The US oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp. was recently chosen by the Saudi government to lead two of three consortiums developing gas projects worth $20bn-$26bn." (*Washington Post* 21/9/01)

However, a nationalist government in power in an oil producing area, aiming to build up a native industrial base – as did most of the rogues in the Middle East that 'the West' has fought against, from Nasser to Hussein – would make for lost profits. The wealth which could go into the coffers of the West's banks, arms companies, construction companies, is instead invested developing local industry. This is bad news, not just because of that lost profit, but even more fundamentally, given that we are talking about areas where lies one of the most valuable commodities in the world – a resource which could form the building block for the development of an imperialist rival to 'the West'.

What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including pGp. If anybody you know in Britain speaks Serbo-Croat or if you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood, then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage. Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

The USA's earnings from the oil trade

The oil industry, as well as being a source of capital, also produces an important resource. While 'America' is certainly not dependent upon imports of it from the Middle East, large parts of the world, included Europe and Japan, are, and thus the more power Washington has in the Middle East the more influence it has over these potential rivals. Thus, in the second two cases, the American state is representing the interests of not just oil corporations, but the overall interests of the corporate elite.

Furthermore, while today there is no American reliance on Middle Eastern oil, in the future this may be radically different. The US Department of Energy recently announced that, by 2025, 70% of the oil consumed in the US will be imported. It could be argued that this would place the US at a strategic disadvantage. There is, of course, a way around this, not to mention the slightly more pressing problem of global warming, and the rise in asthma due to exhaust fumes – the development of sustainable transport alternatives to the petrol driven motor car. But I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for that from a government of ex-oil executives whose election campaign was funded by big oil.

1 "The Looming war isn't about Chemical Warheads", Robert Fisk, 18 January 2003.

2 Michael Renner: Worldwatch Institute January 2003.

In 1992, the US control of the world's oil economy brought in revenue of $4,500 billion a year. This was simply a charge for using dollars to trade. Any country wanting to buy or sell oil did so in dollars. These had to be purchased from US banks, and the banks being businesses charged them for the privilege.

This 'commission charge' helps the US finance its huge balance of trade deficit year on year. The emergence of any alternative currency is a threat to this nice little earner. So, the emergence of the Euro as a potential trading currency adds another imperative for the US to wage this war now.

It also helps explain the opposition of France and Germany to the war.

'Between Iraq and a Hard Place' is an important article, written from an American libertarian communist perspective, analysing the war, its causes and the history of working class uprising in Iraq. It can be found on our Manchester web site: www.af-north.org.

Lions led by *donkeys*

The Great Firefighters Strike of 2002-03

By the time this article is read, it is possible that the firefighters will have rejected government's 'final offer' and we will be in the middle of a bloody war abroad and a bruising dispute at home.

The firefighters rejected the FBU Executive's recommendation at the Brighton conference, but the result of the ballot of all firefighters about the offer isn't yet known. If the strike is still going on, the FBU Executive will be desperately seeking to make concessions that avoid the strike being declared unlawful and the threat of legislation to make strikes illegal in the Fire Service. But the minimum the government is demanding is flexibility on overtime and rostering, part-time working throughout the Fire Service and the loss of thousands of jobs – an outcome totally unacceptable to rank-and-file firefighters.

Eventually a face-saving formula (on all sides) will be cobbled together and the ordinary firefighter will pay the price. With war raging, the FBU Executive cannot afford to be accused of betraying 'our boys', but they risk the union splitting down the middle. It will be seeking an 'acceptable' form of flexibility, despite the fact that the kind of flexibility being demanded has been resisted fiercely for years.

The FBU Annual Conference that launched the pay claim in 2002 resoundingly declared that no strings – such as modernisation – could be attached to the pay offer. We may be in the middle of an all-out strike. Possibly the latest offer will have been rejected, but strikes suspended for the duration of the war. If so, both sides will no doubt be preparing for a second round: government will be preparing a propaganda blitz and legislation to crush the strike, while the FBU will try to enlist other public sector unions and the TUC in a 'popular front' against a war-damaged Blair.

If the dispute has been settled it's usual to read its entrails to discover who won the struggle between organised labour and the state. But with war raging or the government in crisis, winners and losers will take second place to more pressing issues. When the dust has settled, at conference time, each side will no doubt claim something. The FBU Executive will put a brave face on the concessions they will have had to make. Tony Blair and his government of management control-freakery will claim to have defeated the 'wreckers', the new 'enemy within'. Whatever the claims by each side, who will have won the strategic victory both sides began to believe possible last year?

Veto

Some people feared the strike was lost even before it began, back in the summer of 2002 when the government vetoed the 16% pay offer. 'Modernisation' (ie cuts) has been the government's agenda for years and as soon as the pay claim appeared on its radar it struck.

No doubt the FBU leadership expected a quick campaign and the municipal employers to capitulate. But national, pre-announced strikes allowed the government to shoulder the employers' aside in defence of their carefully-nurtured image of competence. The suspensions of strike action and the on-off nature of the dispute helped to lower temperatures, encouraged the media to look elsewhere and created conditions where a deal could be done (because the FBU Executive desperately wanted to settle and still does), while all the time keeping the pressure on the bosses with the threat of the strikes resuming. But a concerted programme of wildcat, random, station-by-station strikes would have put far more pressure on the employer at the local level while allowing no national response. With government unable to bear down on the strikers and the prospect of an indefinitely sustainable dispute, the

employers would have been forced to take back the negotiations and settle.

The biggest losers long-term will be, of course, the rank-and-file firefighter and (less directly) all public sector workers. The firefighters, well-disciplined, popular and with a massive democratic mandate – 87% voted yes when balloted in October 2002 – were led to the picket line like lions and staked out for the media vultures like donkeys.

Backing off

As usual, at the end of 2002, while ordinary firefighters called for the 'big push', their generals quailed, cowered and gave in, sounding the recall by suspending first a planned eight-day strike and then a planned two-day strike.

Too late the TUC and ACAS ambulance was rushed to the field to rescue the survivors: the battered FBU leadership and the discredited fire authority negotiators. No doubt the leaders of the TUC hoped to curry some favours, making themselves useful to the government and popular with members and the public alike. They too are firefighters, though of a different sort...

But their efforts misfired: government ministers and their fat cat advisors hated the way they 'rescued' the firefighters just as they were closing for the kill: public support for the strike was waning, the army was coping and Andy Gilchrist went 'over the top' with his "Time for Real Labour" speech. Two planned strikes in December were cancelled: the enemy within had blinked, and were ready to be crushed. Then came the offer of mediation, the closing of ranks, the critical speeches, the hints of disaffiliation. Blair, Prescott, Blunkett and Raynsford will not forget such disloyalty, and it will be the ordinary worker who pays the price.

Early in 2003, a new round of strikes were threatened and Prescott threatened to take powers to end the dispute and force a settlement, effectively nationalising the Fire Service by taking negotiating powers away from the local employers. The FBU Executive went very quiet. The threat of strikes, quickly smothered by the TUC, gave Blair his chance. How easy it was to wrap his government in the flag and refuse to be dictated to by unreasonable and unpatriotic strikers.

But as Blair's war on Iraq became more and more unpopular, it was less easy to use popular consent and media vilification to paint the firefighters as 'wreckers' or 'the enemy within'. This strengthened the FBU Executive's resolve when it came to debate the (worse than November) offer of 16% over three years instead of two.

The trouble is there is as yet no strategy for winning a pay rise without any 'modernising' strings. The best the FBU Executive can do is hope to postpone the worst and most damaging changes. Even so, sometime soon, perhaps this year, the government will issue a consultation paper on the 'future' of the Fire Service. The counter-attack will be launched. A full-time service (preserved in London and Merseyside) will go and more moderate (and easily cowed) part-timers recruited. Over the next few years flexibility will lead to 4000 lost jobs.

Safety threat

Prescott announced in December 2002 that he wanted to give Chief Fire Officers the sole power to override safety legislation that sets out minimum standards of fire cover. This has been the aim of government since 1980, and as recently as 1999 the employers proposed performance-related pay and local flexibility as the basis of negotiations in the future.

As Bob Pounder, an FBU Executive Committee member, suspended for speaking about the dispute, says: "In Greater Manchester, we face a £5 million cuts package. Prior to this dispute, we were in a strong and militant position. However, unless something changes, the signal will go out that the FBU is a spent force, and this will strengthen the hand of management to implement cuts, which will reverberate throughout every brigade in the country."

Some parts of the fire service will be prepared for privatisation. The corporations delivering public services across the country and for massive sums will be licking their lips. No doubt like the railways, the Fire Service has many stations in prime sites – 150 are targeted to go. Why buy fire engines? Let the private sector buy them and lease them back! More importantly, who will be able to stand against privatisation, part-privatisation and externalisation when the firefighters couldn't? Who can argue against modernisation now? Expect the pace of 'partnership' to quicken and big contracts for public sector provision to fall into the bloated hands of the corporate fat cats.

Some services will be ripe for privatisation

The screw will tighten around the firefighters: "If you can't talk about service improvements, we can't implement the pay agreement". "If you won't modernise, there will have to be job losses". The FBU will be forced to fight on the government's terms, not theirs. All the dispute has done is put them in the firing line this year and next. If a strike should develop it will be on the battleground of service improvement (always popular with the consumer), not fair pay or safety. The moral high ground will have been lost and the dispute, if one develops, will be fought in the swamp of management-speak about 'performance indicators', 'public-private' and 'output measures'. The public gaze will falter and turn away; the dispute will be lost.

More importantly, Blair's jack-booted ministers, Nick Raynsford and John Prescott, will have won a famous victory, consolidating their iron grip on domestic policy. They will have faced down a group of workers driven to the end of their tether and solidly militant because of it. They will have discredited the Left at the same time as they out-manouvered and baffled the FBU leader, Andy Gilchrist. They will have proved that no public service, however valued or organised, is immune from the modernisation treatment. They will have cowed some public sector workers. The TUC will have lost all credit with government while gaining no credit with ordinary workers – they played their part in attempting to sell the firefighters a bad deal, then ran for cover. Workers will be further demoralised, anger about pay and conditions deflated, pay demands moderated, privatisation slowed but not stopped. The fix will be in, and no mistake.

Losers

The big losers will be low-paid public sector workers. Tony Blair raised the spectre of 10%, 15% or 20% pay demands if the FBU won. If the strike is settled on harsh terms, the campaign for a fairer share of public sector spending is almost beaten before it can start. Three per cent is more likely than 15% this year. And with all the talk of recession and economic 'hard landings', it's likely that public sector employees will be faced down and accept less – or rather their leaders will.

The most heartening thing about the strike was the sheer determination of the ordinary firefighter (and the public support they got throughout, despite the government and media's vicious onslaught). They quickly realised the dangers facing them but stood firm, and argued for all-out industrial action to force government to negotiate sensibly and quickly. They also fought to defend the principle that developing public services should be a co-operative endeavour, between those who use and who provide the service.

The service provided on Merseyside has cut fire deaths in half by installing twice the national average number of smoke detectors, a policy championed by firefighters but now threatened by cuts and the breakdown in industrial relations. At the same time, and as a measure of just how corrupt municipal government is, the councillors elected to the Merseyside Fire Authority voted themselves a 50% increase in their allowances (in line with other fire authorities). The Chairman, Peter Corcoran (who got a 52% pay rise), said "independent assessors are saying we should receive proper allowances for the job we do". A sentiment the firefighters would endorse, since their own claim to £30k was based on an assessment by the independent Labour Research Department!

What lessons can we learn? Firstly that strikes are best not led by the so-called leadership, unless workers are prepared to compromise from the start.

Second, that once stopped, they are hard to re-start. It is far better to change your tactic to intensify pressure on the enemy while reducing it on your own forces: rolling strikes and guerilla strikes cause an image of 'chaos' and a dispute 'out of control' which will force the bosses on the defensive.

Thirdly, the trade union leadership will always seek to compromise at the expense of workers rather than jeopardise their mediating role between worker and employer. Fourthly, and most importantly, that there are no solutions within the framework of what we call work, our working lives – no solution to low pay, inadequate pay, unfair pay, antisocial hours or working practices, to stress, to alienation, to bullying or indifferent bosses. Many trade unions were formed to enable the worker to seize the means of production – tools, machines, the lorries and looms, the factories and fields – and to enable workers to organise their working lives for themselves and for society's benefit. Now they just sell insurance. Yet workers, and we are workers too, put our trust in them and expect them to deliver us from the not-so gilded cage of a working life, a life of toil with scant reward. We must organise as workers to take back the means of work, in order to free ourselves from it.

OBITUARY

Michael McLaughlin

The tragic death, aged 34, of our comrade, Michael McLaughlin, came as a great shock to the Anarchist Federation in Scotland and beyond.

Although a libertarian for several years, Michael had only been an active militant of the AF-Alba for about a year. But in that time we quickly grew to realise that he was a comrade of great conviction. And a really good man.

Always practically-minded, Michael took a major role in the organisation of the AF-sponsored Anarchist Dayschool in Glasgow last November and was involved in the AF at all levels of the organisation. Many comrades have happy memories of Michael from last year's National Conference. He was the kind of person who immediately made those around him feel comfortable and valued. He was the kind of person who inspired confidence. When he said he'd do something, it generally got done. We could do with a few more of his kind.

Michael was active in his workplace and was a Health and Safety Rep with the MSF union and also a member of the Clydeside branch of the Industrial Workers of the World. If things were happening, he was generally in the thick of it. His commitment to his social revolutionary politics was rivalled only by his enthusiasm for his beloved Celtic. His first AF meeting was followed by a visit to Parkhead with another AF Celtic-heid (the other three comrades went to Firhill as I remember!).

Michael's funeral took place in Buncrana, Co. Donegal, from whence his family came. We will remember him and carry on the struggle.

On the net

Articles from *Organise!* can be found on the internet at:

http://www.afed.org.uk

You can also email us at:

anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

Donations

There will be a list of donations to *Organise!* in the next issue.

Argentina: **The struggle continues**

In previous issues of Organise! *we situated the Argentinean crisis in its historical context and examined ways in which the situation might evolve. In this issue we take a look at the forms of working class self-organisation that have been built in the space created by the actions of the participants in the original uprising – particularly the factory and workplace occupations.*

On 16 March 2002, armed police and hired goons (including members of the football hooligans' Barra Bravas) forced their way into the Brukman textile factory in Buenos Aires, which had been under occupation since the owner fled four months previously. They were shortly afterwards driven out by the combined forces of the occupying workers, *piqueteros*, members of unemployed groups and local residents. This direct action was one of the first that brought together in practical co-operation the various forms of working class self-organisation that have developed since the December 2001 uprising – a wonderful example of social solidarity put into practice – and one which helped to speed the growth of working class co-operation and autonomy.

One of the most important things about the incredible growth of self-organisation is that the initiatives developed – in the overwhelming majority of cases, outside of any party or institutional influence – are a direct expression of the needs of the participants and the wider community, as against the needs of a particular political tendency (we're looking at you trots!). Also, they arose on a classic spontaneous model – they were formed to meet the demands of the current situation, they are not simply the mechanical application of forms of organisation that were determined elsewhere in a different struggle. Though it should be pointed out that, to a certain extent, spontaneity is really just the coming to light of previously submerged networks designed to meet collective social needs. *Spontaneity* is what the bosses sneeringly call working class self-activity when they finally manage to see what is going on under their noses.

With 40% unemployment (100,000 jobs lost a month), inflation around 11% (also rising) and the state imposing utility bill increases of 50% on heating gas, 35% on electricity and other essential services, it's unsurprising that the first forms of self-organisation were concerned with meeting the immediate needs of the community. To bypass the supermarkets which were making the most of the crisis by increasing prices, a whole network of communal community gardens producing directly for the community developed. People worked together to clear wasteland or other suitable areas for growing food, which is given to those who have no other means of support, or is exchanged for goods from the occupied factories (see below).

Meeting social needs

Similarly, the *piqueteros* (see previous issue for background on these) dealt with the problem of social housing by simply forming a brick-making factory from whatever material they could find and proceeded to collectively build houses for those in need, whilst being fed from the community gardens and the factories. In return, the *piqueteros* also turn out to defend them both from state attacks. The *piqueteros*, who were previously looked down upon and called '*le negrada*' (the blacks), are now seen as heroes and great examples by the people they help, who in turn help them – active solidarity is the key.

A similar approach has been taken to health issues. A number of private hospitals were abandoned by their owners during the uprising. These have now been occupied and are operating as profit-free ventures. The same is true of the system of alternative education, which has mushroomed and operates entirely outside of the state system. Cultural spaces have also been opened, where people come to talk about how they can collectively help each other: plays and songs about working class life and solidarity are performed. Crèches, bakeries and canteens are also set up in these spaces. On top of all this, local communities turn out *en masse* to physically oppose evictions and attempts to cut off essential local services. All of this activity is carried on outside of the state and its local representatives.

Active solidarity is the key

A less successful venture was the '*truque*' or barter network that, at its height of popularity, had over 8,000 clubs and three million members. The problems stemmed from the network's use of an alternative currency that soon became the *de facto* currency in many places – soon 90% of the 'certificates' were forgeries and credit inflation was at 40%. On top of these problems, the network was being used to finance small-scale local capitalism, and large-scale producers were taking their goods out of the system and selling them off at inflated prices outside of the network. (These were not local problems – they are inherent in systems of this type, but we do not have the space to deal with that here.)

A significant change in people's behaviour is their view of 'the family',

which has expanded to include not just immediate blood relatives, but all members of the local community. People have grown to see through joint struggles that their problems can only be addressed through collective action. Their answers lie in working with others, hence the almost desperate desire to forge new links with others in struggle as demonstrated by the unprecedented growth of territorial, local, national, occupational and interest based co-ordinations, which magnificently demonstrate the desire for human community – communism.

In the workplace

The movement of factory and workplace occupations has grown rapidly during the past year, from a handful of isolated and under-siege examples at the start of the year, to a full-scale social movement with hundreds of occupations, complete with regional and national conferences, 'National Plans of Action', and attempts at recuperation by state and leftist forces.

The first occupations took place during the December 2001 *argentinazo*, notably of the Brukman and Zanon factories, which have both played an immensely important role in practical and symbolic terms. These two have become the public face of the occupation movement, providing space for others to work out their own plans of occupation and as a place where the implications of the occupations can be worked out by those they affect – not just the workers.

Today, there are hundreds of occupied workplaces (and not just factories but also schools, hospitals and other 'white-collar' sites) covering every region of the country. A closer look at how these places work, the different forms the occupations have taken and the state's attitude to them reveals that there are in fact two types of occupation; one that results from communities organising to directly meet their own needs, and one under the control of official 'working class representatives' or of representatives of the local state and capitalist institutions who seek to recuperate this activity and direct it into support for 'stability' and the state as benefactor.

The Zanon ceramic factory in the province of Neuquen is probably the largest occupied workplace still actually producing. Pay remains at the same levels as prior to the occupation (with inflation being taken into account) and the ceramic tiles produced are sold at 60% of their former price through a series of street vendors employed by the *piqueteros* or at the 'popular' supermarkets set up in Rosario and other towns specifically to sell the goods from the occupied workplaces. When new workers are needed, *piqueteros* and other unemployed groups are taken on, and at the same rates as the other workers. Decisions are taken by the mass workers' assembly (with delegates from other

groups present) and production is organised collectively. A technical college for members of the local community has also been established.

One of the first things the Zanon assembly sought to do was to establish links with others in struggle, especially the *piqueteros* and other factory occupations, and to that end they hosted a national meeting of occupied factories in April (more on the various co-ordinations and conferences below) which declared that it would start a plan "of public works, controlled by workers, to construct schools needed by teachers and students, public hospitals, and housing".

State interventions

The Ghelco ice cream factory in Buenos Aires highlights a different approach to the direct occupation at Zanon, one that the state is increasingly viewing as both a way out of its stability problems and as a potential bulwark for co-opting the working class back into its political and structural programmes (*à la* Peron and the unions). The factory was occupied by an order of a bankruptcy judge, who decreed that it should be rented back to the workers. After a set period, the factory was then legally expropriated by the local state and handed over to the workers, thus building up ties between the state and the occupation from the outset, and potentially providing support for capital in any future crisis ("after all you're all bosses now"). The Ghleco workers now earn the same pay as before, but working hours have jumped to twelve hours a day to cover administrative expenses.

The state has offered quiet support for MNER (National Movement of Recovered Factories) which lobbies for legal expropriation of occupied workplaces, for wiping out debts and for establishing a clear legal framework for further expropriations. The Brukman factory has been forced by circumstances to follow this path, asking the Buenos Aires government to expropriate the factory and re-hire it back to them, and to give them a preferential option to buy the plant after two years, when it will be put up for sale. Provincial and city legislatures are currently drafting a number of bills to create a government agency to assist in the formation of co-operatives and to facilitate expropriations, as presently expropriation is only legally possible if it is in 'the public benefit'. This temporary manoeuvre is designed to speedily introduce stability, all the better to allow the real capitalists to step back into their old shoes when conditions allow. On top of this, many factories are not actually occupied in the classical sense since they are still paying the previous owners' rent or have written off months of unpaid work and owed back-wages.

Communication and networks

This is not to say that the people involved are not aware of these dangers: they are, and a series of conferences and co-ordinations amongst various groups have taken place to discuss these issues. The Brukman, Zanon and Grissinopli factories all held national meetings attended by hundreds of delegates from all of the groups in struggle. 'National Plans of Action', Solidarity commissions, factory committees, National Workers' Assemblies, 'Plans of Struggle' were amongst the initiatives thrashed out at these meetings in order to turn the state's plans to their own use. The co-operation between the groups over the year has built up very strong bonds of solidarity, a solidarity that was highlighted during the important National March by *piqueteros* last December, made possible through the wider networks established in the struggle.

This March lasted five days, blocking highways and organising soup kitchens, whilst passing through towns and cities that have played a central role in the uprising and in building up resistance (Rosario and Cordoba being particularly noteworthy). The slogan for the march was "Throw the bums out!" and ended up at the Plaza de Mayo (scene of bitter fighting and many deaths last year) on the first anniversary of (President) De La Rua's resignation.

Solidarity actions under the banner of '*Que Se Vayan Todos*' (They All Must Go) took place at the same time in every corner of the globe – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA and Yugoslavia. The network now extends far beyond the borders of Argentina, putting into practical effect the demand for No Borders!

Prospects

The current state of affairs is a series of self-organised initiatives that operate to a greater or lesser degree successfully, and largely outside of the state's institutional structures. But there is a growing awareness and willingness on the state's part to make use of these initiatives to put itself back on its feet – to get capital accumulation started again and to introduce a measure of social stability. There are clear efforts being made to split the movements through recognising certain useful sectors as official and taking them under the (local) state's wing.

This should not be a cause for undue pessimism however – as we pointed out in an earlier *Organise!* the dynamic of people organising their own lives and communities logically leads them to organise against the state. The genie is out of the bottle, and the Argentine working class is in no hurry to chase it back in. When collective needs are taken as the starting point for collective activity, without any fuss being made of this – then we can truly say that struggle has changed people (just like we said it would!).

Discussion board

The Anarchist Federation now has a discussion board at the following address: http://flag.blackened.net/wwwthreads

Log on if you fancy a chat.

Midnight legislation

Class Struggle in Ireland 1760-1840

How the Whiteboys resisted oppression

During the years 1788-1868, 2,249 political prisoners were transported from Ireland to exile in Australia. Of that number, less than 20% belonged to the well-commemorated nationalist rebellions and conspiracies of 1798, 1803, 1848 and 1867.[1] Who were the rest?

From the 1760s to the 1840s successive revolts of the rural poor broke out across Ireland. These comprised of a variety of underground movements with varying names but common characteristics. They are now called after the first such movement – the Whiteboys. These were movements of the rural poor; wage labourers, those who worked in small-scale industries and cottiers (small tenant farmers).

Labourers would often rent (or be allowed to rent land as part of their wage), while the smallest tenant farmers would supplement their income with labouring. Whiteboys were almost exclusively male and young, usually teenage.

Their organisation was secretive and underground, and also fairly libertarian, with independent groups in each town networked with others to form an entire movement across several counties. Of at least one group, it is said that all its members had 'equal command'. There was extensive use of ritual – initiation oaths, elaborate pseudonyms, and uniforms, costumes or special insignia.

Direct action was the method of these movements. Typically a proclamation or 'law' would be issued, to the effect that rents, priest dues or tithes were to be reduced, wages were to be increased or 'land grabbing', by which the middle class forced the rural poor from their land, was to cease. If ignored, the laws would be enforced by violence and intimidation. Firstly, destruction of property, mutilation of animals, warning shots fired through windows, and then assaults and murder as the movements became progressively more violent after the 1790s (as did their opponents). The enclosure of previously common land was resisted by the levelling of fences and grasslands were dug up to produce more conacre – the potato plots on which the labouring population relied.

HEIGHT OF IMPUDENCE.

Irishman to John Bull: "Spare a Thrifle, yer Honour, for a Poor Irish Lad to buy a bit of ——— a blunderbuss with." (*Punch*, 1846)

Class structure

Irish history is portrayed as a series of nationalist uprisings and movements against Anglo-Irish rule. In fact, much rural violence and agitation was class-based, of Catholic Irish versus Catholic Irish.

The employer and landlord of the rural poor was not the Anglo gentry, but the Irish Catholic middle class of farmers. Even where areas were less developed, a 'middleman' stood between the mass of the population and the landlords. A 'Middleman' being a tenant on a long, stable lease, often Catholic/ Irish, and profiting through subletting, but less commercially orientated than the middle class which developed in fertile areas.

Statistics from 1841 show this, and clearly give lie to the popular nationalist view of an Anglo gentry above homogenous downtrodden Irish masses (see the chart opposite).

Living standards of the rural poor

There were localised famines in 1800, 1817, 1822, 1831, 1835-37 and 1842. Prior to 1838 there was no state welfare system. In 1841, two fifths of Irish homes were one-roomed mud walled cabins. In the words of a contemporary observer: "The hovels which the poor people were building as I passed, solely by their own efforts, were of the most abject description; their walls were formed, in several instances, by the backs of fences; the floors sunk in ditches; the height scarcely enough for a man to stand upright; poles not thicker than a broomstick for couples; a few pieces of grass sods the only covering; and these extending only partially over the thing called a roof; the elderly people miserably clothed; the children all but naked."[3]

Commercialisation of agriculture

Whiteboyism existed in the context of and was a response to the growth in market relations, the development of capitalism and the commercialisation of agriculture.This was not universally true: under-developed Clare was an insurrectionary hotbed for instance. However, typically the centres of Whiteboyism were the most fertile, and thus most commercialised areas, and movements arose as a reaction to what the market was inflicting upon labourers and cottiers. Analysed in this way, the world of the Whiteboys was not so far removed from the world we live in today. From the 1720s onwards,

Adult males and rural class structure circa 1841[2]

Category	*Number*	*Per cent*
Rich Farmers (average holding 80 acres)	50,000	2.9
'Snug' Farmers (average holding 50 acres)	100,000	5.9
Family Farmers (average holding 20 acres and usually not employing labour)	250,000	14.7
Cottiers (average holding five acres)	300,000	17.7
Labourers (average holding one acre, though often without any land)	1,000,000	58.8

Irish agriculture was increasingly commercialised and orientated towards export, firstly to French and British colonies and after to an increasingly urban Britain.

This affected Irish society in two ways: firstly the rise of a farming, market-orientated, middle class. Secondly, people's lives were now subject to the dictates of the market. Increased profitability in agriculture produced higher land values, which led to increased rents and the expansion of tillage or pasture for export at the expense of land for subsistence farming (and the people engaged in subsistence farming).

Counter-culture

Viewed from the perspective of 200 years later, one of the most remarkable things about the society of this period is the extent to which popular culture was beyond elite control. Religion was not ordered and structured under the control of Rome until after the Famine, and various folk, pagan and magical practices remained popular. The Catholic Church, only gradually becoming a legal institution, was far from being the established force it was to become. Likewise for most of these decades there was no state education system, and children were educated in 'hedge schools' under the control of the community (i.e. not the state or gentry). This freedom from cultural institutions controlled by the ruling class had a positive impact on the persistence of Whiteboyism. Some of the communities which nurtured Whiteboyism also had a collective economic base, through 'rundale', a form of communal land tenure and farming. This was more often found in economically back ward areas but also could be found on poor lands in generally fertile South Leinster and East Munster.

Early Whiteboyism

In the 1750s, the growing market demand for pastoral products led to an expansion of dairy farming and grazing (which required the enclosure of common lands). As agriculture became more profitable, land values rose, and so did the price of conacre (the small plots on which the bulk of the population depended). The rural poor faced ruin. Beginning in Tipperary, a county which was a fertile producer of agrarian unrest, and then expanding into east Munster and south Leinster, the Whiteboy

CAPTAIN ROCK'S BANDITTI SWEARING IN A NEW MEMBER

movement fought back by tearing down the fences and hedges over what had been common land, and digging up pasture so that it could not be used for grazing and could be turned back to conacre. Grasslands were exempt from religious tithes in Ireland and this tax too became the target for Whiteboy resistance as it fell hardest on those engaged in subsistence farming.

Whiteboys & Rightboys

The period up to the end of the 1780s was characterised by anti-clerical actions in addition to the standard Whiteboy activities. Catholic priests were targeted for denouncing the rebels from the pulpit. In Tipperary "the parish priest of Kilsheelan, Fr. Nicholas Phelan, vigorously condemned the Whiteboys and had to flee for his life from his parish. Tradition also states that a Fr. Darcy of Kilmurry, preached against them in Grangemockler, was attacked by a mob and had to flee also from the district."[4]

The aim was also to reduce the fees priests charged for presiding at various religious services.

The Caravat Whiteboys

The most class conscious and violent of the Whiteboy movements, the Caravats arose in Tipperary, as a result of the agricultural boom created by the Napoleonic Wars. Rising land values and higher prices, coupled with an increasing population which hindered the possibility of a rise in wages or employment, squeezed the rural poor. The Caravats demanded that wages rise, rents be lowered, 'land grabbing' to cease, also inflationary practices such as hoarding food to end, all "by order of Sir John Doe, Governor of Munster"[5], as the notices of these Whiteboys read.

Failure to comply with Caravat demands after three warnings meant a degree of violence greater than that previously used by Whiteboy groups. There were also numerous raids for arms and robbery of mail coaches and such like, as well as a concerted effort to drive migrant workers from Kerry and Cork out of the Tipperary area, and so reduce the supply of labour. Organisers were sent into the adjoining counties of Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork and Limerick to stir things up there. The Caravats began to move in a less pragmatic day-to-day direction, and according to some reports had as their ultimate goal a re-division of the land.

This episode was unique in the response of the middle class. From 1806 an organised violent retaliation, in the form of the Shanavests – a remnant of the nationalist United Irishmen-Defender organisation of the 1790s, and held in readiness for a French landing that never came – was directed against the Caravats. Apart from individual assassination, this conflict consisted of fights at fairs and other public gatherings (where both organisations tried to recruit), involving hundreds and even thousands of participants armed with traditional wooden clubs, home made swords or spears and sawn off shotguns. This was the most pronounced expression of the struggle between labourers and the farming middle class. By 1811 the area was flooded with troops – more than had been there during the 1798 rebellion and a 'special commission' sent to investigate. The Whiteboy-Shanavest conflict appears to have persisted until the Famine period.

In the 1820s discontent was channelled into the Catholic Association, a middle class organisation aiming to end the remnants of the Penal Laws which discriminated against Catholics, specifically the ban on Catholics sitting in the House of Parliament. Led by the right wing nationalist Daniel O'Connell, and employing the 'moral pressure' of 'monster meetings', i.e. mass rallies, this body saw its goal achieved in the 1829 'Catholic Emancipation'.

People soon became disillusioned, as aptly described by one priest: "I have often heard their conversations, when they say, 'What good did Emancipation do for us: Are we better clothed or fed, or our children better clothed or fed?" As a Whiteboy put it: "Emancipation has done nothing for us. Mr O'Connell and the rich Catholics go to Parliament. We die of starvation just the same".[6]

A new wave of Whiteboyism broke out, with the Terry Alts and Lady Clares in Clare, Galway and Roscommon, and the Whitefeet in Leinster. This is the first outbreak of Whiteboyism for which there are police statistics, which record for Clare and Connaught (and most of this was happening in the single county of Clare) the following 'outrages' in 1831: Administering Oaths (952), Assaults (566), Attacks on houses (1,684), Homicides (72), Cattle Maiming (125), Illegal Notices (875), Levelling (244), Robbery of Arms (571) and Demand of Arms (135).[7]

The social class which produced Whiteboyism was devastated by the Great Hunger at the end of the 1840s, and by the emigration that followed. Whiteboyism continued in some of the more backward areas, those untouched by commercialisation and which had not seen Whiteboyism before, e.g. West Ulster. But the Famine can be said to have been its end, and just a shadow persisted. The rural working class was

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silent for decades afterward until a brief adoption of syndicalism in the early 20th century. Whiteboyism was to a small extent exported with emigration, most famously with Pennsylvania's Molly Maguires.

The Whiteboy phenomenon was contemporary with the beginning of the long march of the Irish bourgeois to state power, aka 'national independence'. During 1760 to 1840, the two historic faces of national liberation had their first outings. The 1790s saw the radical, non-sectarian, secular, revolutionary, republicanism of the United Irishmen-Defenders and the 1820s the narrow, Catholic reformism of Emancipation. At the same time a proletarian struggle existed in opposition to both, rather than as a subsidiary of either.

Class struggle continued irrespective of national flag, and the nationalist movement, as a movement representing bourgeois interests, fought the class struggle against the proletariat.

On those occasions where the bourgeois successfully managed to marshal the rural poor behind their flag, e.g. Catholic Emancipation, the people got nothing out of it.

The non-existence of Whiteboys in history, as it is written, remembered, televised and commemorated, is instructive of the role played by nationalism in 20th century Ireland. That is, as part of the hegemony of ideas, aiming to paper over class divisions with a heroic myth of national oppression and national redemption. It is for this reason that we remember 1803, 1848, and 1867 while the Whiteboys go down the 'memory hole' into oblivion.

1 *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850,* Palmer, p58.
2 *Ireland since 1800, Conflict and Conformity,* Hoppen, p38.
3 Quoted in *The Great Irish Famine,* Campbell, p18.
4 *Carrick-On-Suir and its People,* Power, p83.
5 Quoted in *Irish Peasants, Violence and Political Unrest,* Clark and Donnelly, p86.
6 Quoted in *Ireland since 1800, Conflict and Conformity,* Hoppen, p19.
7 *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850,* Palmer, p326.

Fatherhood

Or, some mad rad dad rants

Children, the most joyous, innocent and playful people, in my humble opinion need not just 'equality' with adults, but often in today's 'civilised' societies, children should take priority over adults. Children obviously need to be cared for and they need to be nurtured; most basically they require love, and lots of it. You certainly don't have to be a parent to know that, but to fundamentally understand it in principle helps a lot.

The word father was never in my vocabulary prior to becoming one, for a variety of reasons. The word father sounds distant, formal and it implies hierarchical authority: father figure, head of the family, Our Father Who Art In Heaven.

I'd never used the word father and I'd certainly never thought about any concept of fatherhood. How badly prepared the male of the species is for one of life's greatest gifts. Volumes of books have been written upon fatherhood exploring many issues. Recommended is: *Fatherhood Reclaimed* by Adrienne Burgess, which gives an empathic perspective to the subject.

With men particularly de-sensitised to the core, parenting is still for many little more than a duty-bound, long-term chore, bringing with it a compulsion to work and a financial liability with no payback. The idea of totally giving ourselves to our kids, playing with them, listening to them, learning from and with them, requires comprehension that totally overcomes conditioned masculinity (and conditioned femininities too). Both sexes are equally capable of transcending 'father absence' and – just as important – 'mother dominance', if only the effort were made.

The overwhelming majority of men do not begin to struggle to be 'new' or PC – why should they? Yet the status quo portrays men as self-absorbed, authoritarian, workaholic, drinkaholic, football crazy, emotionally untouchable, fevered egos. A recipe for disaster that currently has to be dealt with and then cleaned up afterwards as best as can be.

There is urgent need to understand and acknowledge the extent of the uneven deal that men frequently receive. Most men miss out on so very much, competing endlessly and aggressively, wrongly asserting how 'right' we are. We speak only of absolute facts all the time, with a tendency to beat ourselves (and other people) up, physically and mentally, much of it verbal, often violent. In reality, men are fallible, vulnerable, emotional and do possess all the capacities for empathy and compassion.

Abuse

One outcome of conventional parenting/educating is that two to three children are killed every week in this country, usually by a parent! Care homes for the most vulnerable kids are increasingly found to be riddled with child abusers... The parents who think they are doing the best by their kids by giving them 'everything'. It seems much more likely they are taking everything away from them, profoundly denying their true identity. Children in consumer societies are abused in a wide range of ways. So many discarded children, with a distraught Planet Earth unable to meet their needs.

The necessity some people feel for assuming power and control to suit their egos results in gross imbalances throughout our lifetimes. Consequently, every interaction, communication and intimacy is likely to be affected. There is a desperate global need to transcend all oppressors, authoritarians and control freaks. The human race is suffering great collective illness, nature made sick and requires healing... Only with a substantial authentic 'equality of parenthood' can the foundations for putting an infant's best interests first and foremost ever be implemented. Association and discussion are every bit as essential as loving is for children. And we need to deflate our adult egos, if we are to deliver what some of us preach, the primacy of children.

Where does 'parenting' stop and 'educating' start? It's a complex, grey area, and perhaps they are even the same thing. Most parents 'home educate' until they send their kids off to school... It seems the secret to 'successful' parenting is to go all out to really be oneself. Not always easy, at times incredibly difficult. How few people really know themselves, whilst truly loving their friends, family, extending to the broader environment they live in, the world at large? It's tough trying to maintain daily contact with every little feeling and emotion, even after years focused trying. Maybe the revolution of everyday life is the everyday life of revolution...(hmm).

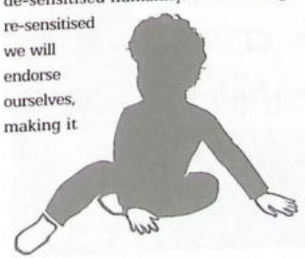
Becoming a parent can present the future in a clearer, brighter light. I want to suggest being a caring parent is deeply rooted and revolutionary, as starkly amazing as any other aspect of life. Thoughtful contemplation and the practise of fatherhood (growing together respectfully and sensitively) could eventually become a full frontal challenge to patriarchy, the regulation male domination of everything, power, organisations, wealth etc. Looking after babies and children could play a direct part in changing societies towards harmonious (complex, chaotic, creative, co-operative) fulfilling, gratifying natural spaces... The world over is seeing through the redundancy of the capitalist system. Observe at first hand its continuing failures: legal murder (wars), persistent harangues by hideous leaders with fingers twitching on nuclear buttons. Why shouldn't we dare to consider alternatives? Apathetic/crushed/damaged/sore people could help quicken the beginnings of new communities that people might want to live in...

After years of routine-type meetings, demos etc there's a feeling of being less restricted, less robotised as a militant now I'm a dissident dad. Often preferring now to work with women and have female friends, I relish the distance from conventional militancy – competitive, aggressive egos struggling for status, dominant influence, 'non-hierarchical' leadership.

Elites of un-powerful power-mongers, blindly critical, guilt-tripping, regurgitating and putting people down, rarely offering useful, constructive, positive and healing remedies of any variety or substance. Empathy, sensitivity, compassion and a rational determined reverence for the remarkable variance of life or continue with hastening degradation?

The lunatics are running the asylum, they care nothing about the multitudes of common people as they threaten to press buttons that could end everything we 'have' and have known. Maybe there never was any hope in these environments where free will and up-front equality might never be even vaguely considered, never mind 'understood' or realised. Same old shit... Until all are free, everyone remains in chains, physical, mental, spiritual. Men and a few women might have a lot to lose, yet humanity and nature have everything to gain. The current fetish for 'freedom', 'justice' and 'equality' are horrific in actuality and worse in result: women copying 'successful' men and claiming equality. How sad, demeaning and utterly vulgar. All oppression becomes more firmly fixated, more stagnant, more engulfing.

It seems basic gender equability is very rarely openly talked about, except for some crazy, unconventional anarchistic type people. If adults got to really know themselves intimately, to understand the damage incurred and recognise a need and desire to heal and visibly move forwards, then could begin the transcendence of this de-sensitised humanity. In becoming re-sensitised we will endorse ourselves, making it impossible not to love and care for all children everywhere.



Perhaps, in an ideal world, all adults would care passionately, would relate like parents to every child. Wow, how does that sound? All those caring, nurturing, multiple influences... Nobody with love to give yet living lonely lives, isolated and unsupported. Nobody need ever work at looking after children because of the accident of birth, if they were not up to it for whatever reason. No more obligation. Everyone gains, adults, kids, the planet and the phenomenon that is LIFE.

Learning from play

So much can be learnt from children. Play has phenomenal learning potential, yet today it is seriously undermined, as is the inventiveness of questing children. Where does 'play' end and the process of 'learning' start? To help children to play freely we must start to comprehend ourselves as adults, what has been hurt, warped, damaged and/or lost in each of us, men and women. With a healthy support network of friends, family, and perhaps therapy, counselling, yoga or massage, etc, we could re-adjust perspectives against the enforced mainstream. Then we can begin to do justice to the children and inspire through our 'being', our selfhood, with children. We can learn to play again amongst ourselves, and could perhaps for the first time really learn how to learn... If we dearly love our children, if we were to respect our 'partners' past, present and future, then things will change. We can undoubtedly all grow every single day of our lives, the potential profound. If we don't sacrifice our kids to the horrors of establishment schools and instead home educate them, if we take children seriously and make efforts never to coerce them, chances are good they will develop into centred, rounded, creative, co-operative free-thinkers. Those free-spirited kids could live their lives as they choose voluntarily, respectfully and virtually spontaneously. Rich, deep, fulfilling, whole lives, with inner and outer peace for themselves, each other and all of nature... an ideal worth striving for?

Yelensky's fable

A history of the ABC by Matthew Hart

For close to a century, anarchists have united under the banner of the Anarchist Black Cross, for the sole purpose of supporting those comrades imprisoned for their commitment to revolution and to the ideas of anarchism.

Who would have suspected that a few men supplying boots, linen, and clothing to deportees in Bialystock would have been the beginning of an organisation that has spread throughout the globe?[1]

Recently, statements have been made referring to the history of the Anarchist Black Cross as mere folklore. But a dedicated search for the organisation's history uncovers information that is far from fairy tale. Hundreds of pages filled with facts regarding the history of the organisation are being assembled by members of the Los Angeles branch of the Anarchist Black Cross Federation in hopes of one day publishing it.

The Anarchist Black Cross dates back to the politically turbulent times of Tsarist Russia. Due to the cruel aristocratic rule of the Tsar, many Russians began to search for answers outside of existing political institutions. The words of Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin created a massive stir within the soul of the Russian people and their desire for freedom lead many of them to rebel against the toil and serfdom that defined their very existence. With the rise of political opposition to the Tsar, many anarchists, socialists and revolutionaries paid for their desire for freedom by imprisonment, exile or death.

Conditions within the prisons were terrible and political prisoners faced cruel treatment.[2] A prisoner's aid organisation called 'Political Red Cross' was formed to support prisoners within Tsarist prisons or labour camps. This organisation not only provided aid to prisoners, but many times assisted escapes from prison or places of exile. The great anarchist thinker, Peter Kropotkin, was one of the many former political prisoners that owe their freedom to members of this organisation.[3]

Although the PRC was non-partisan, it wasn't long before the Social-Democrats (the followers of Karl Marx) gained control of it. Aid to anarchists or others not associated with the Social-Democratic Party began to dwindle. When anarchist supporters became aware of this they were infuriated at this divisiveness.[4] The only way their comrades would receive help was for the anarchist community to create their own aid organisation and the Anarchist Red Cross (ARC) was formed.

The exact year of the Anarchist Red Cross' formation is unclear, but it is estimated by Rudolph Rocker that it was formed during 1900-05. The organisation came about during a meeting in London with Vera Figner, who was the treasurer for the political prisoners of the Party of the Socialist Revolutionaries.[5]

If this is true, then the ARC appeared no earlier than 1905, the year Figner was released from prison. The only known visit by Figner to London was in June of 1909, but by then ARC groups were already established. During the visit a meeting was held and it was agreed that the ARC would support both Anarchist and Socialist-Revolutionaries in prison and in exile since both had been excluded from the Political Reds.[6] Unlike the Social-Democrats, as long as prisoners were social revolutionaries they would be supported.

Chapters

By 1906, the ARC had groups in Kiev, Odessa, Bialystok and other cities, probably as a response to the mass arrests by the Tsar following the 1905 Revolution. Trials of revolutionaries took place throughout the land, including at least six members of the ARC for their involvement in the 1905 Revolution. Many fled the country and those who managed to escape started ARC chapters in other countries. The first was in London in 1907. The organisation collected funds from other chapters throughout Europe and sent them to political prisoners in Russia. Those involved in the London branch included Peter Kropotkin, Alexander Shapiro, V Cherkezov and Rudolf Rocker. The following year, the first North American chapter was started in New York and soon other chapters were formed in Chicago, Philadelphia, Brownsville, Detroit and Baltimore.[7]

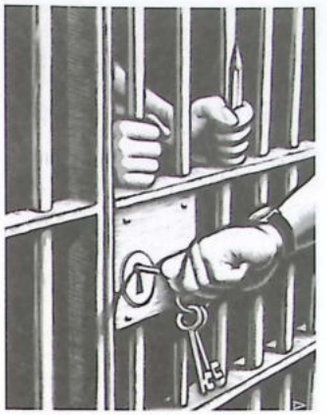
One of the more interesting groups in early ABC history was the Lettish section of the ARC. In 1914, the anarchist community became enraged when John D.Rockefeller ordered National Guardsmen to attack the striking workers and their families in Ludlow, Colorado. Several miners, women and children were killed and anarchists planned to give Rockefeller the same treatment.[8] Members of the Lettish section of the ARC drew up a plot to assassinate Rockefeller. Sadly, on the morning of the planned assassination, the bomb planned for the industrialist went off in the apartment where the anarchists were staying, killing ARC members Charles Berg, Carl Hanson and two others. The bomb showered the street below with debris and body parts. Dozens of people were injured and repression after the incident increased heavily. This event became known as the 'Lexington Avenue bombing'. The plot involved non-ARC members and one other ARC member, Louise Berger, who had left the building minutes before and got away unharmed.[9]

With the outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the ARC in the United States disbanded after news was received that all the political prisoners had been released. Several ARC members went to assist the revolution in Russia, where they were warmly met by the political prisoners they had once supported. But, before long, the Bolsheviks began arresting 'counter-revolutionaries'.[10] With the rise of a new dictatorship, the ARC was forced to reorganise in 1919 as the Anarchist Black Cross, to avoid confusion between them, the International Red Cross and the Political Red Cross.[11] In the Ukraine, the Black Cross was organised as defensive units to protect cities and villages and organise resistance to pogroms led by Cossacks, White Guards or the Red Army. Many of those involved in these units were members of the Nabat Confederation in the Ukraine or had previously been active in the ARC in the United States.[12]

Because of their activities, Anarchist Black Cross members experienced constant harassment by the Bolshevik government, including the seizure of goods, imprisonment for belonging to an illegal organisation and murder of ABC activists. By 1924-1925, the organisation in Russia was virtually destroyed.

Several members of the ABC, like Lea Gutman, Helana Ganshina and Aaron Baron, were arrested and killed by the Bolshevik government. Others were arrested but due to international campaigns by anarchists abroad were later released.[13] At least two ARC members converted to Bolshevism but later lost their lives during the Stalinist purges.

Several individuals who got out of Russia met in Berlin and reorganised the ABC. The organisation stayed in Berlin for several years before moving to Holland and then Paris. Chapters in the Unites States re-emerged to support the comrades still in Russian jails, but by 1936 contact with them began to dwindle and by 1940 all contact with prisoners in Russia ceased. Later it emerged that most, if not all, anarchist political prisoners were killed during Stalin's purges.[14]



International focus

By this time the Spanish Civil War and then Second World War broke out in Europe, and the organisation switched to a more international focus. ABC worked to aid anarchists fleeing Fascist persecution and those arrested in the resistance movement. Most ABC members at this time were Russian Jews, so being caught in Europe during this period meant almost certain death. Once again, Social-Democrats refused to assist ABC in helping their comrades escape and caused hundreds of Jewish anarchists to die in Nazi concentration camps.

By 1939, most of the chapters in the United States and Europe collapsed under the work needed to support thousands of anarchist prisoners in Europe and the organisation seems to have disappeared. As the ABC this may have been true, but it actually continued for two decades under different names: The Joint Committee for the Defense of Revolutionists Imprisoned in Russia, Society to Aid Anarchist Prisoners in Russia, Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association, Chicago Aid Fund and the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund. All these organisations were continuing the work of the ABC.[15]

Towards the end of the war, only a few groups remained active. The Berkman Aid Fund in Chicago, one of the few groups able to organise serious aid operations, organised a Paris branch, where C.A.R.E. packages were sent to anarchists in serious need of funds and support. This work went on

for many years but eventually it was forced to discontinue activities after 1958.[16]

In 1967, the organisation re-emerged in England, where it initially helped prisoners of the Spanish resistance. The London ABC promoted the concept of the Black Cross and during the International Anarchist Conference in Carrara. Their call for an International Anarchist Black Cross was answered. Other chapters emerged throughout Europe, the United States and Australia.[17] But the early success of the organisation was also met by repression. Members were arrested, tried and even murdered. Stuart Christie, one of the founders of the London chapter of the organisation was arrested several times and on one occasion held for more than a year after being accused of having been involved in the Angry Brigade, an underground group active in the United Kingdom in the 1970s. In the end, he was found innocent of all charges and released.[18]

On 12 December 1969, Guiseppi Pinelli, member of the Milan chapter of the Anarchist Black Cross, was arrested after several bombings in Italy. Not for the first time. Pinelli was interrogated for three days and on the third day, 15 December, he was thrown from the fourth story of the police station and killed. The authorities claimed Pinelli had admitted the charges against him but later it emerged that the bombings were the work of neo-fascists, backed by the CIA and NATO.[19]

This 'strategy of tension' involved planting bombs to destabilise the government, discredit the Left and allow the fascists to take power. Pinelli was targeted because he was a well-known anarchist and was investigating a planned fascist coup prior to his murder. It became necessary to kill Pinelli to ensure the plot's integrity.[20] In 1971, Georg von Rauch, Secretary of the ABC in Germany, was pulled over by the police and, while resisting, von Rauch was shot.[21]

Several months later, Augsburg police closed in on two known radicals and during the arrest, Thomas Weissbecker, another ABC member, was shot. Both Weissbecker and von Rauch had been associated with the 2nd June Movement, the most prominent left-wing German urban guerrilla groups of the '70s. Both lived very short lives and their involvement in the movement can be described as short but intense.[22]

In the late 1970s, members of the Anarchist Black Cross in Huddersfield were tried in what became known as 'the Persons Unknown' trial. Another UK member, Phil Ruff, was accused of inciting the Gartree Prison Riots in 1978. Stuart Christie, mentioned earlier, continued to remain 'Public Enemy #1' in London and in Spain during the '70s, and was constantly under police harassment.[23] Members of the Irish ABC, Noel and Marie Murray, took part in several armed actions in Dublin. In September 1975, during a robbery at the Bank of Ireland in Killester, an off-duty police officer was killed and Noel and Marie were given the death sentence, later commuted.[24]

In 1979 Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, an anarchist political prisoner in the US, issued a 'Draft Proposal for an ABC Network' in hopes that it could build a movement to assist anarchist political prisoners. He believed the ABC should be a united mass movement rather than individual collectives. His initiative influenced the growth of the Anarchist Black Cross, but no unified organisation developed. However, in 1989 some unity did develop with the setting up of the 'Emergency Response Network' (ERN). This was a response to political raids, crackdowns, death sentences, hunger strikes, torture or killings of members of the ABC or the communities they worked with. Following police action, ABC groups around the world would send telegrams, make phone calls or hold demonstrations within 48 hours. Sadly this idea was not widely taken up and the ERN faded away.

Although ABC groups continued to undertake support work, a united ABC front never materialized; there was little common focus or unity. In 1994, a conference of ABC groups was held and once again the ERN was set up. In 1995, four ABC groups (New Jersey, Bronx, Washington DC and Brew City) got together to form the ABC Federation. Other groups joined, but, in 1996, issues of direction and goals caused a split. Those leaving the ABCF would soon create the Anarchist Black Cross Confederation but this organisation only lasted a couple of years. The ABCF continued and after seven years is still very active. Other networks

emerged such as Raze the Walls, which was very successful for a number of years but disappeared around 1998-1999. Remnants of it remain in Seattle. Networks in Europe, such as the one in Poland, have recently emerged and seem to have a bright future. And an even more recent creation has been the Anarchist Black Cross Network in Texas and a few other places.

The history of ABC is far from a fairy tale. This article is only a small portion of the history that has been discovered by just a handful of people and we are sure more information is waiting to be found. We welcome the assistance and aid of anyone interested in searching for the past of the ABC.

As for the title of this piece, Boris Yelensky was a man who for over five decades dedicated his life to political prisoners throughout the world. He fought tirelessly for his fallen comrades and is a man who should not be lost within the pages of history. Nor is he a man whose work should be forgotten or discredited as myth or folklore. He should be remembered and respected as one who has gone before us; one who helped pave the way. Boris Yelensky, once wrote, "The work is not done for the glory, but because we believe in Mutual Aid". We must take these words to heart and continue our work in that spirit. We are always reminded of the words of Ojore Lutalo (an anarchist political prisoner currently held in Trenton State prison): "Any movement that does not support its political internees is a sham movement". Free All Political Prisoners!!

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NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet Radical Books, 1621 Fleet St, Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchiste Émile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O, Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them through our website.

A question of organisation

Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968
by Alexandre Skirda, translated by Paul Sharkey
AK Press
Reviewed by Geert Dhondt, Valley Anarchist Organization, Western Massachusetts, in *Northeastern Anarchist* #5

In the name of the principles of individual autonomy and freedom of initiative, every stable organisational tie was repudiated as being authoritarian and thus anti-anarchist. Gaetano Manfredonia

It will be readily appreciated that I cannot remain indifferent to the nonchalance and negligence currently obtaining in our circles. On the one hand, it prevents the creation of a coherent libertarian collective that would enable anarchists to take their proper place in the revolution, and on the other, it permits a making-do with fine phrases and grand notions, while shying away when action is called for. Responsibility and collective discipline should not cause alarm: they are the fellow travellers of the practice of social anarchism. Nestor Makhno

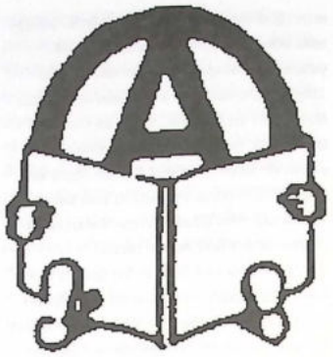
"Anarchy! Organisation! These are contradictory." I heard these comments, with fellow comrades from the Valley Anarchist Organization (VAO), at a gathering in Western Massachusetts. These confused and misguided rantings did not come from an ISO initiate or Trotskeyite prankster, but from an unsuspecting individual who came across VAO's literature table. He seemed to possess little or no knowledge of anarchism, or other revolutionary traditions. He was, however, echoing a common misunderstanding that anarchism has absolutely nothing to do with organisation, that "anarchism and organisation are opposites – how can you have a group with a name such as Anarchist Organization?" Unfortunately, given the current trends in radical politics, there exists a general reluctance by anarchists to educate non-anarchists about what anarchism is, and a refusal among many anarchists to attempt to come to a consensus definition of anarchism.

These comments do not only come from those unfamiliar with anarchism, this narrow and misinformed perspective is also to be readily found within the awkwardly emerging anarchist movement. Recently, I've read and heard from people who take the labels of 'individualist', 'insurrectionist,' and 'primitivist' that they are highly suspicious of the new revolutionary organisational efforts of North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC) and the Bring the Ruckus (BTR) draft proposal, specifically because of the strategic organisational structures that these groups advocate. Individualist anarchistic tendencies mistrust of anarchist organising is nothing new. It has existed since the debates amongst the 19th century anarchists.

The book, *Facing the Enemy*, is new ammunition for anarchists who want a greater understanding of the history, successes and failings in anarchist organising, and the debates and controversies that plagued our 19th and 20th century radical predecessors. This book is for those who are interested in creating truly revolutionary organisations. Organisations that are absolutely necessary for those not just interested in 'fucking shit up', but for those who are fighting to win. What a timely book.

The focus of *Facing the Enemy* is on anarchist organisations in France, Russia and Spain. It is divided into 20 chapters, plus an appendix of about 100 pages of original documents (such as *The Organisational Platform*) and a bibliographic list of names. The book starts off with Stirner and Proudhon, continues with chapters on Bakunin, bakuninist organisation, The Alliance and the First International, propaganda by the deed, anti-organisationists and bombers, the rise of syndicalism, international congresses, World War I, the Russian Revolution, and a large part on the Dielo Truda group (a group of Russian anarchists in exile in France), their *Organisational Platform of Libertarian Communists* and the debates around the *Platform*, the CNT-FAI and as well as some more recent anarchist organisations in France.

In *Facing the Enemy*, Alexandre Skirda historically and theoretically analyses why it is that anarchism



throughout history has failed to bring about a new and free society. "Torn between strident individual autonomy and a sometimes lumbering collective approach, libertarians have regularly failed to leave a definitive liberating imprint upon events and upon the movement of history."

Skirda believes that a reason why anarchists have failed to make an imprint on these events is because anarchists have failed to build effective organisations. The main focus of the book is the organisational platform of the Dielo Truda group. The book builds up the writing of the *Platform* as the highlight of anarchist organisation, drawing on the lessons of the Makhnovists during the Russian Revolution and the following chapters discuss the influence of the platform on those organisations.

Skirda contends that the *Organisational Platform* is directly in line with Bakunist organisation. The *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists* was written in 1926 by the Dyelo Truda group, an assemblage of Russian anarchists living in exile in France in the aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolution. Drawing upon their experiences in the anarchist movement for more then 20 years and analysing the failures of the anarchist movement during WWI and the Russian Revolution, the *Platform* was written as a proposal to form an organisation, one that would be able to respond to crises, such as war or a revolutionary situation, and then take advantage of these crises to build a free society.

Facing the Enemy is an important tool

to be used in the current debates in the anarchist movement around organisation and synthesis vs. platformist and cadre organisations. The platform organisation, as detailed and analysed by Skirda, was subject to every sort of criticism and accusation of being anti-anarchist. In similar fashion to the attacks against the platformists in the 1920s, NEFAC, which seeks to federate anarcho-communist collectives, and the Bring the Ruckus proposal, which calls for the formation of a revolutionary cadre organisation, are facing anti-anarchist criticisms by some of today's anti-organisational, self-proclaimed anarchist factions.

A whole chapter covers the debate around the *Platform*: attacks on tactical unity and collective responsibility by Malatesta, synthesis vs platformist debate with Voline, as well as a debate that the *Platform* was the 'Bolshevisation of anarchism'. Interestingly, the strongest opposition to the *Platform* came from anarchists who stood by the synthesis position. This synthesis idea is not to differentiate your position from different anarchist tendencies, but instead that those who hold contradictory positions can work together in a meaningful way. The aim of this process is to try to fuse the different anarchist tendencies and be as inclusive as possible. This synthesis position is exemplified now by social ecologists working in the modern movement.

Taking the perspective put forth by *Facing the Enemy*, anarchists will find insight into the problems plaguing the success of NEFAC and the Bring the Ruckus document. I find that these groups are the current versions of the platformist (NEFAC) and cadre (BTR) traditions of anarchist organisations. These two groups, though utilising different issues, come forth from a tradition including Bakuninist organisation, the Alliance, the *Organisational Platform* and the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation). Bakunin thought that a revolutionary anarchist organisation should be the grouping of a small group of well-disciplined revolutionaries that would act as a sort of 'general staff' in the revolution, who "would take great care not to supplant the people in its struggle for emancipation". This organisation was to guide the revolutionary masses in an anarchist direction.

The aim of the revolutionary organisation was, according to Bakunin, "to assist the people's self-determination on a basis of absolute equality, and full and multifarious human freedom". The Alliance was the Bakuninist organisation within the context of the First International and while both these groups were pursuing the same ultimate goals, their strategies were different. The International had as its mission to organise the workers into one body, while the Alliance had as its mission, "the endowment of those masses with a genuinely revolutionary direction". The *Organisational Platform* picks up the tradition where Bakunin left off.

As Skirda explains, "The chief reason for the anarchist movement's lack of success has been the absence of firm principles and consistent organisational practice". Anarchism had to "marshal its forces into an active general organisation, as required by reality and the strategy of the social struggle of the classes", which was in tune with the Bakuninist tradition and the wishes of Kropotkin. This organisation would lay down a general tactical and political line for anarchism, leading on to an "organised collective practice". This does not mean that they believed that all anarchists should unite under this one platform; from the very beginning the Dielo Truda group stated that this would be impossible and undesirable. There exists a wide variety of tendencies within anarchism which are often contradictory. The *Platform* was written to "make an ideological and political selection of anarchism's homogeneous forces and at the same time differentiate themselves from anarchism's chaotic, petit-bourgeois (liberal) and rootless elements".

The creation of an organisation of militants on the bases of a theoretical and practical programme, differentiating themselves on the basis of ideology and strategy from other anarchists, is the core of the *Platform*. Similarly, the creation of the FAI in Spain in 1927 is the continuation of these ideas of organisational practice. The FAI was created to keep the CNT (National Confederation of Labour), a large union, anarchist. The FAI goal was to keep watch over the "CNT's doctrinal orthodoxy", a relatively small group of anarchists who worked to steer the CNT into an anarchist direction. The objective of the *Platform*, the formulation of the FAI, NEFAC and the BTR, is to organise along the lines of a theoretical and practical programme. It is not the purpose to take control of any movement but instead it is the strategy of the formation of such groups to influence and steer autonomous self-activity of oppressed people into a revolutionary and anti-authoritarian direction.

I have found this book extremely relevant if not invaluable to my understanding and approach to the issues we face in today's anarchist movement. But the book is much, much more than that. It is a complete and easy to read history of anarchist organisations in 19th and 20th century Europe. It covers the struggles our deceased and beloved comrades faced and how important anarchist figures related to organisations. *Facing the Enemy* also includes interesting details and anecdotes (such as a police-paid-for anarchist paper in Paris, police infiltration of anarchist 'propaganda by the deed' groups or how Voline translated the *Platform* to French from Russian to give certain important words different meanings in an attempt to undermine the *Platform*).

Skirda exhibits full control of the subjects he discusses and the book is full of quotes, interesting analysis and insights into the events that shaped 20th century anarchist theory. Skirda's invaluable historical account is written in a serious and sometimes witty style. *Facing the Enemy* also gives an accessible overview of how different trends within anarchism developed throughout the last 150 years. I sincerely hope that this important book will be widely read.

The Bolsheviks' pet anarchist

Victor Serge: The course is set on hope. Susan Weissman. Verso. 2001. £22. 364pp

Verso seem to want to cash in on the awakened interest in anarchism around the world. To quote from their press release: "A spectre is haunting the world, the spectre of anarchy… condemned as a 'travelling circus' and even a fascist threat to democracy, the anti-globalisation protestors summon up a spirit that has been vilified by both left and right… Victor Serge, the subject of this timely political biography, perhaps best articulates this revolutionary spirit. Here is a man who genuinely deserved and relished the 'anarchist' label."

Fortunately the writer of the book is a little bit more objective than the author of this puff, putting Serge's break with anarchism in 1913 (whether this itself is true, we'll look at later).

Victor Serge has been popular in this country among Trotskyists eager to adopt a 'libertarian' veneer in order to recruit anarchists to their cause. This was certainly the case with Peter Sedgwick (translator of Serge's superb *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*) and David Widgery (both members of International Socialism/ Socialist Workers Party and both now deceased). They held up Serge as an example of a 'libertarian Bolshevik'. Indeed Widgery, through his writings for both *Socialist Worker* and the hippy underground papers *Oz* and *International Times*, attempted to don this apparent mantle of Serge, himself posing as a 'libertarian Bolshevik' when in practice his devotion to the SWP was slavish.

Serge, whose real name was Kibalchich, was born in Belgium to two exiled Russian revolutionaries towards the end of the 19th century. His family's precarious existence meant that he experienced hunger from early on, and in the course of his life he was to have a long acquaintance with hunger: his younger brother died at the age of nine due to a bad diet.

Moving from the ideas of the Belgian Socialist Party and rejecting parliamentary action, he adopted the ideas of French individualist anarchism after his expulsion from Belgium in 1908. He went further than most, supporting the illegalist wing, which believed that all free individuals were justified in turning to theft and robbery to maintain themselves.

Individualist anarchism was greatly influenced by the thinkers Stirner and Nietzsche. In many ways it reflected the defeats and repression suffered by anarchism and the workers' movement in Europe, a turning away from the class struggle, the social anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin, and revealed the penetration of bourgeois ideas into the movement, even though in the main it was made up of working class people.

Rather than looking to social action, it turned to the individual, who through thought, action and life-style would achieve some sort of liberation. It had a disastrous effect on the anarchist movement in France, Italy, Germany and Argentina and, in my view, contributed to the development of the anti-organisational wing of anarchist communism around the Italian anarchist Luigi Galleani; this represented a frightful synthesis between the ideas of anarchist communism and anarchist individualism.

The extraordinary personality of Albert Libertad was one of the architects of individualist anarchism in France. Serge became an orator at *Les Causeries Populaires* – the People's Chats – that had been initiated by Libertad and were a series of lectures well attended by the Parisian working class.

It has to be remembered that this form of individualist anarchism, unlike later varieties, at least looked to the long-term goal of an anarchist communist society. Through vegetarianism, and indeed veganism and fruitarianism, teetotalism, giving up of tobacco, coffee and tea, and through regular physical education, this school of anarchism, Serge wrote, "demanded everything of us and offered everything to us". At this time Serge thought that "the anarchist is always illegal – theoretically. The single word 'anarchist' means rebellion in every sense". In the illegalist milieu some dodgier types even justified prostituting their girlfriends.

Serge began to write for *l'anarchie* (in lower case, because capitals were hierarchical!) and unlike Lorulot, its previous editor, who at least looked towards some anarchist communist future, exalted illegal acts and the cult of the individual.

From around this magazine emerged the Bonnot Gang, who began to rob banks,

moving on to shooting down bank employees. One of the Bonnot Gang, Garnier, justified this by writing, "Why kill workers? They are vile slaves, without whom there wouldn't be the bourgeois and the rich. It's in killing such contemptible slaves that slavery will be destroyed".

Serge, as one of the theoreticians of this movement, wrote in *l'anarchie* the article "I am with the bandits" on January 1912: "I find that their role is the beautiful role… the bandit is virile". The Bonnot Gang were either shot down by the police or were to face either the guillotine or long years in prison, which many did not survive. Serge was implicated and at the trial broke solidarity with his co-defendants by trying to say there was a vast difference between theorists like him and the illegalist gun-toters. That he was accidentally involved in an affair in which he was innocent. Yet he had been its main cheer-leader!

Spotting Lorulot, who had rejected illegalism, in the audience during the trial, he demanded that he too should be charged for having mixed with and lodged illegalists, going so far as to falsely accuse him of informing. This did not stop Serge from getting five years in prison, portrayed in his excellent novel *Men In Prison*. Unfortunately these strange political contortions are glossed over in Weissman's book, which devotes about three or four pages in this biographical work.

Following his release from jail, Serge went to Barcelona, involving himself in the Spanish anarchist movement and the failed uprising there in 1917 (which became the subject of another of his fine novels *Birth of Our Power*). Again, this part of Serge's life is given short shrift and I would disagree that Serge had broken completely with anarchism in 1913, as he at least attempted to associate with an anarchist movement looking towards the masses and social action.

Arriving in Russia in 1919, he enthusiastically joined the Bolsheviks. Serge's writings of this period are shallow justifications of the Bolsheviks' authoritarian rule and appeals to anarchists to join the Party.

When the Kronstadt sailors rose against the Soviet regime in 1921, Serge agonised but failed to resign from the Party. He had attempted to become involved in mediations between the Kronstadt sailors and the regime via the anarchists Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman. Serge's ambiguous attitudes and vacillations earned him the contempt of both the anarchists and the Bolshevik leadership.

It could be said that the jump from individualist anarchism to Bolshevism was a quantum leap. Yet both shared a contempt for the masses and Serge was not the only individualist to sing the praises of Bolshevism. Lorulot, for example, was to write in 1918 that: "in time of revolution, a measure of dictatorship is necessary" and by 1921 was arguing for an "iron dictatorship of the proletariat", a "dictatorship of elites over brutes". Other individualists like Armand, Mauricius and Charles Auguste Bontemps also spoke sympathetically of the Bolsheviks' methods. As Stalin began to establish his rule, Serge became associated with the Left Opposition within the Party and with its leader, Trotsky.

It would be fair to say that whilst Serge worked with Trotsky he never really regarded himself as a Trotskyist per se. For this he suffered persecution, exile in Siberia and imprisonment in dreadful conditions. Weissman's book, a large one, deals in the main with this part of Serge's life. Indeed, Serge's final years in exile in Mexico are assigned one chapter, so that the book as a biographical work seems oddly unbalanced.

Serge showed remarkable courage as an oppositionist, it must be said. What is particularly valuable is the depiction of the relationship with Trotsky. He is shown as unspeakably arrogant, intolerant and narrow-minded, and Serge falls out with him over many things. Yet he still remains oddly impressed with 'The Old Man' in spite of his behaviour, seeing him as one of the great figures of the Russian Revolution.

Serge at least offered later insights, in 1937-8, into the course of the Revolution, when he admitted that the suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt was a dreadful mistake, as was that of the Makhno movement and that the establishment of the repressive political police, the Cheka, was the beginning of the end.

Serge was a great writer, and his novels must be regarded as some of the greatest works of 'proletarian literature', as indeed are his Memoirs. The realism of his works is flecked through with great sensitivity. He saw most of his generation of revolutionaries dead in combat, executed, or forced to commit suicide and he remained alive through some fluke of luck. This immense tragedy had an effect on his revolutionary morale. Though supporters of Serge have defended his final statements, where he seems to be accommodating himself to the Gaullist regime in France, my opinion is that he was turning to some form of social democracy and had lost hope in the power of the working class to overthrow capitalism through a social revolution.

Serge was an immensely interesting character, but the sketchy description of key parts of his life fail to do justice to him. This is not the definitive biography.

Sloppiness in research gives us some real howlers too. At the risk of sounding like one late writer on anarchist history, I'd like to point out the following. Elisée Reclus, the French anarchist thinker, is given as Recluse (this is repeated in the index); the Black Guard, an anarchist grouping organising in Moscow is confused with the movement around Nestor Makhno in the Ukraine; the great poet Yesenin is given as Yesinin, and the French sycophant of Stalin, Vaillant-Couturier is given as Vaillant-Couturior.

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Don't Back Down, Revolution Now Press & Distro, 808, 14th Street, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0P8, no price

Don't Back Down! is a detailed and highly informative manual of how to take direct action and avoid the consequences for the serious activist.

It provides information on equipment and supplies, getting people together for action, tactics during and after riots and other actions, first aid for people gassed/sprayed, techniques for staying calm, to stay focused, looking after other people and generally having a successful 'day out'! This short pamphlet/zine is packed with information, easily carried on the day or photocopied to be distributed among people up for direct action and protest. It's a very valuable work, with lessons for all no matter where you are, and clearly written by people with a lot of experience to share.

As the Distro says: "there's no fucking way the revolution will be transmitted via the internet. Paper zines can be carried in your back pocket, read in the crapper and passed to anyone on the street. Paper zines slide below the class lines, phone lines and picket lines. Paper zines don't give a shit about the cyber gap....". Get it, and pass it on!

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Catalogue

South Chicago ABC Zine Catalog, PO Box 721, Homewood, Ilinois 60430, USA

For those interested in supporting prisoners, this catalogue of zines, newsletters and pamphlets provides the basic tools to understanding the oppressive nature of the US prison system in detail and the ways in which it is resisted in depth.

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Letters

Dear Organise!
Many thanks for publishing my letter in Issue 56. I have had similar letters published in *Class War, Green Anarchist* and *Republican Communist* (Scotland), but as you can imagine, not in mainstream predominantly Trotskyist papers. This is partly because groups like the SWP, SSP and SLP and their allies do not wish to disturb their relationship with the masses by appearing 'ultra green', 'loony left' etc. This is understandable, because at the present time capitalist ethodology has made the car a functional feature of its population and the means of urban and regional distribution, as well as a status symbol. The old crafts of horse-drawn ploughing, inshore fishing and machine shop production, with stable and widespread community use is, to capitalists, an anachronism. Significant in this respect is their denunciation of 'Eastern Bloc' inefficiency in production and farming practice: 'whereas the East German regime employed ten thousand in a factory we need only one thousand'. They also mention the inefficiencies of Soviet labour distribution. Even their hero Ford is no longer a model, as robots replace human skill in order to increase profits. Ford, of course, created the human robot, but human labour is now only viable at third world slavery rates.

The Labour and Tory parties are able to sustain votes without interacting with the people outside of a TV screen. This is because the masses in Britain are intent on obtaining cars and other 'first world' luxury items, even though many workers can only afford second hand cars. I refer to the car as the 'vehicle of alienation' because it is devisive and sustains capitalism, destroys the environment, and separates the First from the Third World. In China there are over 600 people to one car. Communism, to function successfully, must collectivise transport and that will include bicycles.

Grass roots action has been very successful in building experience in community and debate. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, yet again there will undoubtedly be an increase in resistance.

Best wishes
AC, Edinburgh

Dear *Organise!*
I was surprised at the inclusion of a text by the group Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty in the letters section of issue 59 of *Organise!* Their statement was reproduced complete with address, website and telephone details – a fine endorsement of SHAC's politics.

Why no Editors' reply?

SHAC's comparisons between the Nazis and people who work in the laboratories at Huntington Life Sciences are reactionary bullshit. The ludicrous ideas that they spout about individuals with feathers or fur are hilarious but should they be given any space in a revolutionary anarchist magazine? This ongoing association of anarchism with animal rights in this country acts as a hindrance to the development of an anarcho-communist movement. Why help perpetuate the idea that contemporary British anarchism is linked with these sorts of idiots?

For communist anarchy
Dan. East London.

Dear *Organise!*
I'm starting a project that I was hoping maybe some of your readers could help me with.

I'm looking at 'Anarchism in the North East of England, 1945-1995' for a North East Labour History Society project that will hopefully become a chapter in a book next autumn. There is too little attention paid to the British anarchist movement by historians, especially in the post war period, and I'd appreciate any help in an attempt to at least begin to rectify this. Obviously, before anything goes to the publishers, I'll anonymise contributions (if that's what contributors want). If anyone can help me with this in any way, I'd like to hear from them at this address:
PO Box ITA, Newcastle, NE99 ITA
Or by email to: paletinyo@yahoo.co.uk

In solidarity, Lewis

Aims and principles

1. Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part on its overthrow. Trade unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation for the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different to ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist-communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self-activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method.

We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise of a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.

I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.

Please put me on the AF's mailing list.

Name .....

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AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.
Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505 Belfast, BT12 6BQ.

Revolutionary portraits

Senna Hoy

Senna Hoy was born Johannes Holzmann in 1882 into a well-off Jewish family.

We continue our series, on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Hoy is mentioned as a member of Helen Blavatsky's Theosophical circle in Berlin in 1903, when he would have been 18. The following year he broke with the compromise politics of the Social Democrats and their accommodation to the Kaiser's Germany. He took the name Senna Hoy (his first name more or less spelt backwards) and started bringing out a weekly anarchist magazine *Kampf* (Struggle). *Kampf* reached the circulation figure of 10,000 in 1905, which was no mean feat for a political weekly of that period.

Kampf was an amazing publication. Alongside the agitational articles were pleas for sexual freedom, above all gay liberation. Whilst not homosexual himself, Senna Hoy was a pioneer in advocating tolerance of homosexuality. In 1903, in conjunction with Adolf Brand, he brought out a pamphlet, *The Third Sex*, on the subject. Alongside this were articles from artists, writers and poets. Erich Muhsam, who was to become a notable anarchist and end up being done to death in Hitler's concentration camps, began to contribute and was a close associate of Hoy.

Gustav Landauer, another notable anarchist who was to be murdered in the repression of the Munich workers' councils in 1919, also contributed. Trailblazing artists and poets began to contribute, like Paul Scheerbart, who invented 'sound poems' and the gifted poet and writer Else Lasker-Schuler (she had thought up his new name). Hoy had a profound influence on Franz Pfemfert who was to bring out the magazine *Aktion*, which united revolutionary ideas in politics and art. Pfemfert paid tribute to Hoy when he called him:" A 20-year-old political conscience in Berlin. He did not go in vain into the fight for freedom".

Kampf prophesied a coming war with the British Empire, that the Social Democrats would support it and that it would be disastrous for the German masses. Senna Hoy argued for workers' self-organisation and against the trade unions controlled by the Social Democrats. Anarchists from *Kampf* went to the industrial region of the Ruhr to spread this message in 1905, and their efforts laid the basis for a strong working class anarchist tradition there. A national network around the magazine began to be created, which spread throughout Germany.

Repression

The Berlin police began to take note, and repression against Kampf forced Hoy to leave Germany for Switzerland, where he edited the anarchist magazine *Der Weckruf* (The Dawn). A great revolutionary ferment was taking place within the Russian Empire from 1905-1907 and Hoy gravitated to this. In Poland and Lithuania, part of the Tsar's Empire, the anarchist movement was young and vibrant. A secret conference of anarchist-communist groups from these two countries took place in June 1907 and a Federation of Anarchist Communist Groups was set up.

In the repression which followed, 24 anarchists were arrested, among them Senna Hoy, apprehended in Moscow. They were imprisoned for a long time in dreadful conditions. Hoy was tortured and then sentenced to prison with hard labour. Some of the comrades became mad as a result of the appalling treatment they received. In 1911, Senna Hoy was moved to the notorious Citadel prison in Warsaw, and from there to the criminal lunatic division (with echoes of the treatment of dissidents under the Soviet regime).

Suffering from TB brought on by starvation, he was in a terrible condition. Else Lasker-Schuler, who was in love with him, came to Russia in 1913 to plead for his release. But it was already too late, because a few months later, on 28 April 1914, Senna Hoy was to die at the age of 29. His body was brought back to Berlin. Else Lasker-Schuler wrote a moving poem in tribute to her fallen lover. But let Senna Hoy have the last word in a poem smuggled out of prison in the last year of his life.

What does it mean to have lived, felt, known, wanted, sown, reaped?
Soon I will be no more and the world – who knows? – will last for eons.
Deeds there are, which I haven't done, thoughts burn – which haven't ripened yet.
Pain, whips, which haven't tortured, laughter resounds, which I haven't laughed.
There go my gravediggers to their work with pipes, jokes.
The last thought ices over in the brain, last desires shriek in the heart.
I regret every crime in my life that I haven't yet committed,
Every wish which I haven't realised in my life.

Senna Hoy had an important part to play in his action and his influence on others in the growth of the German anarchist movement, and his obscurity is unjustified.

T/SOR/16/30

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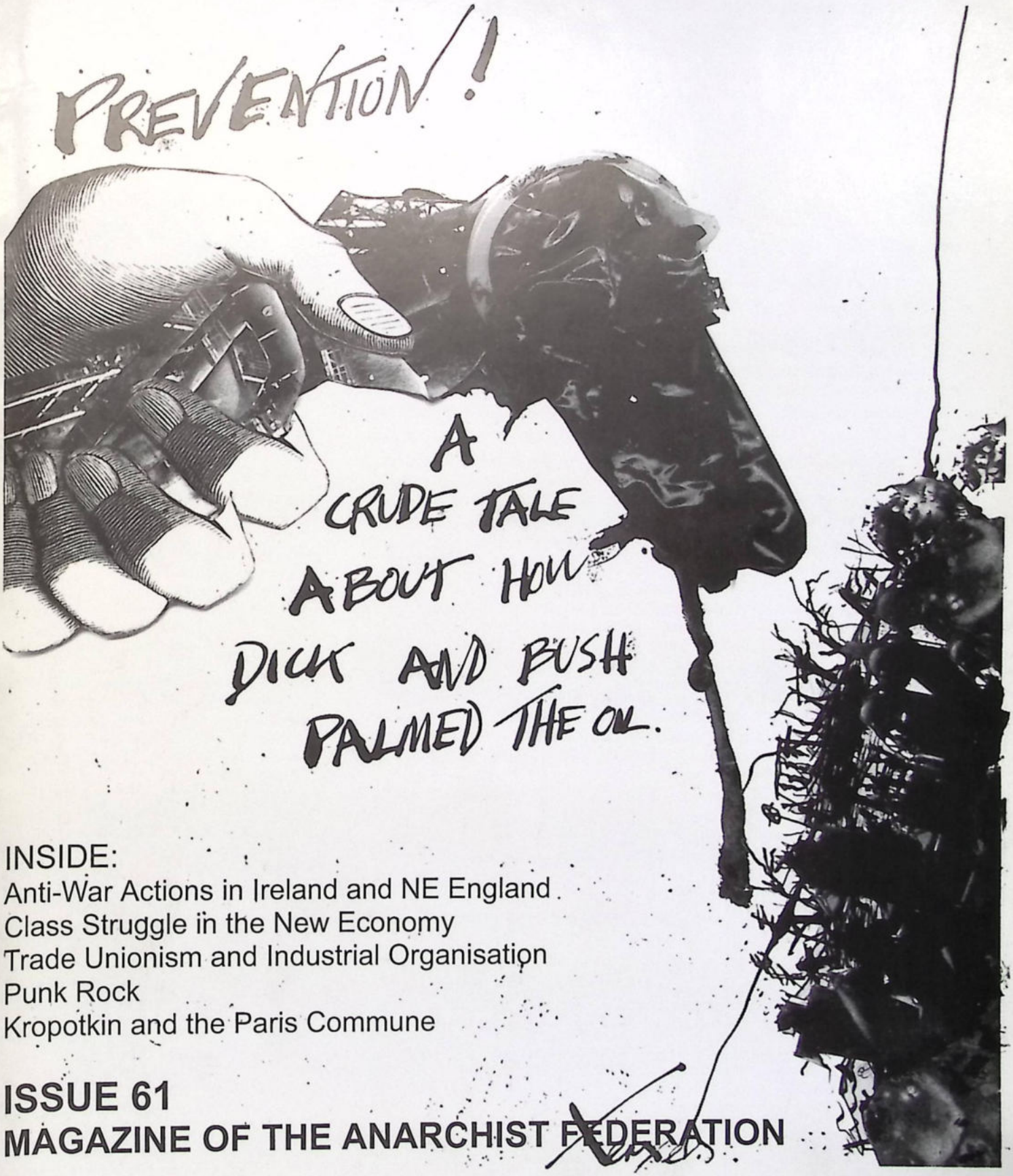

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Anti-War Actions in Ireland and NE England
Class Struggle in the New Economy
Trade Unionism and Industrial Organisation
Punk Rock
Kropotkin and the Paris Commune

ISSUE 61
MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Organise!

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). *Organise!* is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and initiate debate on ideas not normally covered by agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* twice a year. To meet this target we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first.

The article in this issue on Kropotkin, the Paris Commune and Free Communism is the second we have published by Brian Morris. To ensure it read as an article in itself, we edited it and removed some references. Issue 55 featured Kropotkin's theories on tribal society.

Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our Aims and Principles can leave much open to debate. As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from readers and spur the debate on.

The next issue of *Organise!* will be out in May 2004.

All contributions for *Organise!* Should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed directly to the editors at: anarchist_federation@yahoo.co.uk.

Due to unforseen circumstances, the AF finds itself strapped for cash. We have had to make some economies with this issue. Our apologies. We will publish a list of donations made in the next issue.

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Websites

Anarchist Federation: www.afed.org.uk
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Back issues

BACK ISSUES OF *Organise!* are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each plus SAE.

Issue 50: GM Foods, Who owns the land, War in Kosovo, Ireland.
Issue 51: War in Kosovo, Roots of our movement, Land and Freedom, East Timor
Issue 52: Mass Direct Action, East Timor, Youth Resistance to the Nazis, Workplace Notes.
Issue 54: Civil war in Colombia, Humans and Animals, Giving Up Activism, Dissent
Issue 55: Land and Ecology, Kropotkin and Tribal Society, Mental Health
Issue 56: Anti-Capitalism, Riots in Oldham, Anarchist culture
Issue 57: The War Against Terror, Class War in Argentina, ADD. Primitivism
Issue 58: Afghanistan War, Class war in Argentina, ADD, Primitivism and Deep Ecology, Santa Claus, Anarchist song in France and Italy
Issue 59: The Sex Issue. Sexual freedom.? Interview with a dominatrix, sex workers and industrial organisation, China, the Ardititi del Popolo (anti-fascism in Italy), the Prison Industrial Complex, the Zazous (French youth against the Nazis)
Issue 60: At war with Iraq, the Firefighters, Fatherhood, Argentina, The Whitboys in Ireland, Senna Hoy.

Alternatively send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

T/SOR/16

FEATURE

Confessions of a peace thug: *Shannon and Direct Action*

One year in the campaign to demilitarise Shannon, a civilian airport in the West of Ireland, now used by the U.S. military.

This is a personal report of my own participation and observations, so of necessity it is strong in some areas - the various demonstrations at Shannon, and weak in others - the peace camp, the surveillance. ost of what I have been doing in the campaign to demilitarise Shannon has been helping to organise meetings, leafleting, organising buses, sticking up posters, and running another bus, and sticking up posters, and sticking up posters, and sticking up posters and oh yeah did I mention sticking up posters?. Needless to say this report has been a bit "sexed up", with little emphasis on humdrum work and more on the those rare moments of adrenalin rush, with special reference to that one glorious piece of mass destruction on October 12th.

I was first down in Shannon in mid August last year. We were only about 70 strong, yet we defied police orders to stay outside the airport, and by entering caused a warplane to leave without refuelling. On August 31st there was a 24 hour women's peace camp outside the airport, with an information stall in Shannon town itself which got a good reception. On September 1st there was a small picket outside the main terminal. Also at this time two American warships carrying ammunition to the Middle East were due to stop over in Cork, but this visit was cancelled because of planned protests. On the night of September 3rd Eoin Dubskywent into the airport grounds and re-decorated a warplane. I am normally critical of "ploughshares" type action but it led toserious anti-war mobilisation - a month the numbers protesting at the airport increased tenfold. Shannon became a public issue. On October 12th hundreds of people turned up to demonstrate and after a fence was surgically struck and decommissioned, one woman darted across the runway grounds pursued by Keystone Cops. She was followed by well over a hundred, who soon faced water cannon and police dogs. Ten people were arrested but released after the people occupying the runway grounds refused to move until they were released. After the airport road was blocked we all went down to the cop shop to make sure they would get out.

Shortly after this the Third Grassroots Gathering took place in Belfast. This brought together over one hundred environmentalists, anarchists, and other assorted troublemakers from across the island and beyond. There were almost 20 different workshops on a wide variety of topics including Gender, Direct Action, Social Centres, Reclaim the Streets, Sectarianism, and Forest Gardens. Long and laborious meetings at this event sought to co-ordinate an autonomous strand within the peace movement with an orientation towards direct democracy and action. We announced a 'day of action' on December 8th. That day a diverse throng of around 400 demonstrators gathered in Shannon, accompanied by 200 Garda (on two shifts), the Garda canine unit, undercover police, Special Branch, a police helicopter and Aer Rianta's own security. Well we must be doing something right. We set off on a long trek to the airport, complete with music from a shopping trolley sound system and fiddle player. Strangely absent were mass produced placards bearing the same slogan, so people had to make do with D-I-Y banners, homemade T-Shirts, one coffin with 'Irish Neutrality' written on it, various Uncle Sam/Dubya impersonators, and a bunch of kids chucking flour about the place. A team of graphic design artists went to work on the truly crass 1970s tail fin monument near the terminal

building -a piece of public "art" that seems to plead 'paint me!', 'paint me!', in a whimpering despair filled voice every time you pass it. It was briefly transformed into a memorial to the recently deceased anti-war activist Philip Berrigan and to the Iraqi children slain by UN sanctions and the US war machine. Despite names being taken there were no arrests.

After a wee bit of a hibernation over the hols the new year saw an avalanche of escalation. A permanent peace camp was set up. On January 18th thousands travelled to the airport.

The best thing about that day was the spontaneity, which was also perhaps the worst thing! I'm a great believer in the power of chaos but after you occupy the rooftop of a derelict building before breaking into ….a hanger? No a cafeteria stockroom! Yes that's the day you know throwing a dash of organisation into the pot just might improve the taste. Just a dash mind.

But it was all great craic. Although people have dissed the rooftop occupation as a bit pointless, we had dodged police dogs to get on to the roof so the disgruntled look of disgust as we gazed down upon the bacon, was a pleasure to behold. No one was nicked on this occasion. The demonstration and peace camp had a sizable impact. World Airways - one of the charter companies ferrying U.S. troops through Shannon - took the decision to re-route 17 of their flights to Frankfurt in Germany. A posse of peaceniks permanently camped on the doorstep were not a reassuring sight to the suits in the corporate boardrooms. And as a result, the government had to make Shannon safe for Washington. Injunctions were brought against peace

campers. One answer came when Mary Kelly did a bit of D-I-Y on a military plane and a few days later the Pitstop Ploughshares Five had a go at the same plane after it had been repaired. World Airways pulled out and repression from the police and media went up well more than a notch. The terms of Mary Kelly's bail was to ban her from Clare, and the five were to spend several weeks in prison, only being released with punitive bail conditions - including having to sign on every day with the police. The media smear campaign - which is basically the psychological warfare wing of the police - also went into action. Sections of the anti-war movement -such as the NGO peace alliance (who had just organised a 800 strong demo in Shannon) and the Green Party - who were pro-smashing warplanes one minute and not the next, sought to distance themselves from these actions.

And the troops went in with armoured cars and guns; they would have had tanks only the Irish army doesn't have any. This was half a publicity stunt, half a cost-cutting exercise as soldiers don't have the power of arrest but are paid much less than cops. The Star's headline "Will They Shoot on Sight" must have given hard-ons to many in the US Embassy. That was the point: intimidate the 'citizens', reassure those whom the 'public servants' really serve. Two weeks later we were to get a lesson in the reality of "democracy". F15: over 100,000 on the streets of Dublin, opinion polls showed massive opposition to the Government's support for the Anglo-American war effort. Many of us had argued that marches around city centres had no impact on state policy. We pointed out that the really huge demonstrations which had taken place in London and Glasgow had not changed British Government policy which was still dictated from Washington and were accused of being negative. Well here was the proof in Ireland that we were right - we marched, but nothing changed. Demonstrations like this can be useful, as a morale boost, as a way of getting more people involved. I helped organise four buses to F15 and two local protests around that time. But a strategy of marching and marching alone will do nothing. You couldn't miss the truth of that when in the face of the biggest demo in Dublin in years the state didn't change it's actions one iota. Unfortunately this truth missed self professed "revolutionary Marxists" (like why have a revolution if lobbying works!??!!) and republicans (hey couldn't you have had a protest march instead of '800 years of struggle'?) by a couple of hundred miles.

It would be nice to have a real positive article but how can we write about the March 1st action without mentioning the massive hostility shown by the Left towards it? March 1st was first discussed during the January 18th demo, developed in local meetings after soon after was put forward to the

leadership of the Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM) as a day on non-violent direct action. We emphasise the word leadership because much of the membership of the IAWM had no awareness of our approach. That leadership's reaction was to call a protest march for the same date, then to claim that nasty anarchos were hi-jacking *their* event. In the week running up to the March 1st Action, two charter companies carrying American troops through Shannon pulled out, citing "security threats". World Airways having already pulled out, according to media reports, this left one charter company hired by the American military still using Shannon airport, as well as direct military flights. One big push might have done it.

Instead, the Labour Party, the Green Party and Sinn Fein all pulled out of the day without consulting the rank and file, though to their credit, individual Labour Party and Green Party people refused to follow the diktat of their leaders. The Socialist Party and Socialist Worker's Party marched in a separate contingent which ignored the attempted direct action and meandered up to the terminal. The Green Party had their national conference 30 minutes up the road where Shannon was high on the agenda for discussion!!!!! Some people had genuine problems with a 'day of action' but when a political party which (still!) has an armed wing starts waffling about the need for 'peaceful protest', y'know this is for party political reasons not a matter of principle. These parties want to appear radical to hoover up radical youth, yet respectable enough to win votes, forge electoral alliances or earn union funding. They invented reasons not to support the March 1st action and denounced it in the mass media. For example: 'it won't be a family day out'. Aye, and Trotsky went down in history for running a crèche during the storming of the Winter Palace. Or: 'It's premature'. Sure, after the fall of Baghdad would have been a better time. There is no evidence that public opinion and protest marches altered the situation and clear-cut evidence that direct action at Shannon changed things. If you don't believe me, ask the airlines why they pulled out of Shannon or Jane Fort, acting head of the U.S. embassy in Dublin. In the Sunday papers following March 1st, she admitted that direct action had caused "difficulty", had prompted the airlines to review their position and the movement's tactics had been "really threatening". This from the representative of a regime guilty of mass murder, stating clearly that we had got them over a barrel and on the run. You could play by the system's rules, do only what you are permitted to do, and Jane Fort will probably love you, there will be no controversy, you'll have a nice media image, no political backlash……and you'll get absolutely nowhere. Imagine what a unified mass non-violent direct action mobilisation in Shannon on March 1st could have done. Following March 1st, the movement went into reverse. Day X reaction didn't keep the pressure on Shannon and two of the further demos there either massively policed by the boys in blue or kept under control by the political parties.

Direct Action is not another way of saying militancy, it means going and sorting a problem yourself, as opposed to indirect action - asking someone else to do it by lobbying or voting or whatever. Direct action's purpose is to have an effect, to directly sort out the problem. The diverse actions at Shannon, by creating a 'security threat', led to the charter companies pulling out. Shannon was being demilitarised as a result of direct action. Now there's all kinds of 'direct action'. The successful penetration of security at Hillsborough during the Bush-Blair summit? The blockade of the Dail? Here in Galway we marched into a Fianna Fail office, and likewise in many other places the focus was on the politicians. But where was the end product? Many of these events had the form of direct action but the content of protest lobbying. 'Put pressure on the politicians', start with letter writing, get progressively frustrated through protest marching until you're throwing paint at the pricks. But in the end the focus is still on politicians who will not listen. After Day X, the dominant form of action was…. wait for it…marching. This can be a cul de sac. You come to a march in Dublin, then another and another. As they have no noticeable effect do you keep coming? Or do you just become more cynical and disillusioned? We need an effective strategy. We need to fight where we can win because that builds confidence and overcomes apathy. The point of direct action is to build up a general climate of confidence and culture of resistance through winning and most importantly through winning by our own efforts.

The conservative left's campaign against direct action served to facilitate state repression. People arrested in October started to get their summons and more people were arrested and charged on March 1st. House raids, arrests and riots cops appeared on the horizon. Blanket policing prevented a march from even getting into the airport grounds. The numbers of cops at Shannon station increased massively: last year there were 234 cops in Clare with only 30 in Shannon. Now there are 140 in Shannon alone. Many activists have been banned from Clare despite it being unconstitutional according to a High Court judge. Even so, the state has not thrown a ring of steel around an impenetrable citadel: on Good Friday last, the Catholic Worker spud-planting division went walkabout through the airport grounds and built a shrine. The state has mobilised sufficient numbers

The pictures included in this feature come from the Workers Solidarity Movement - http://struggle.ws/wsm.html

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in **ORGANISE!** you might be interested in these:

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Collective Action Notes. Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5.00 for an issue. It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anticapitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists. Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St- Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them through our website.

of police to match the numbers those networks up for mass direct action can produce. They have also know that the only mass direct action they were going to see from large sections of the anti-war movement will be rhetorical. Charter companies have returned, and others have come to replace the ones that haven't. To prevent further demobilisation, defendant/prisoner support is crucial. Its effectiveness (or lack of it) will inhibit or facilitate further action or further repression. All of the fines and legal costs arising out of the March 1st action, and most of the costs from October 1st, have been met by support networks.

From a libertarian perspective the point of direct action is that people winning small victories through direct action are empowered - a culture of resistance is built up. This is an essential short term goal for all who dream of a free society without hierarchy and bureaucracy. You cannot change social relationships by legislation but only through a mass movement of people shaping their own destinies. Only an empowered people can do this. We need to create and support forms of direct action that are most accessible to all people. We don't need a specialised activist elite - unless we wish to reproduce the hierarchy and alienation of capitalist society. We need mass participation.

We are faced with a conundrum. Direct action (which only a small minority can/will take part in) or ineffective protesting? Are those our only options? It looks like it, if it is currently beyond our capacities to mobilise sufficient numbers for mass direct action. However there is a way out. That way out leads through the soft underbelly of USAF Shannon, the corporations which operate the airport. Top Oil re-fuels the warplanes but it may also have put the petrol in your car or the oil in your central heating. As a pretty small indigenous company, with just over a hundred filling stations and some local distributors in a very competitive market, it is susceptible to a consumer boycott, which would have an immediate and direct effect.

We can establish a spectrum of resistance ranging from boycotts to mass trespasses to hammering planes, in which everyone can play a direct part in the de-militarisation process. All of us can participate directly, on our own initiative, at whatever suits us. This strategy also applies to other issues and arenas of struggle. Our main goal should be on seeking ways to have an impact *and* empower people through mass participation. In regard to Shannon, obviously the heady days of the spring of 2003 are over. Time to pack up and go home? I think not. The planespotters down at the airport report no appreciable reduction in military traffic - hardly surprising when you consider that troop numbers in Iraq have not be reduced. The war may not continue on Sky News but it does on the ground. Similar arguments were heard in the aftermath of Afghanistan, that is: no war equals no anti-war movement. But the war is still going on and it is being waged as much by local businesses like Top Oil as it is by the US Marines and *fedayeen*. Something like the Top Oil Boycott Campaign can incorporate action - hurting the company's sales figures and propaganda - keeping Shannon and the war in the popular consciousness by being out there on the forecourt.

The Anti-War Movement in the *North East*

Though the war in Iraq is still being conducted at a low level, memories of the anti-war movement seem very faint.

Yet, for a few brief weeks in spring, a highly significant movement helped send perhaps two million people to demonstrate in London and a further 100,00 in Glasgow. The opposition to Blair's invasion of Iraq also appeared in towns and cities all over the country and was sustained for several weeks before the war was finally declared ended. As everywhere else, the north east of England experienced some incredible moments in this campaign and the anti-war movement there, like elsewhere, provides both inspiration and lessons for anarchists.

The Tyne and Wear Stop the War Coalition was set up in the aftermath of the September 11 destruction of the World Trade Centre, it being obvious from early-on that the US would respond with aggression and violence, and that Britain would support this stance. But things did not really take off until relatively recently: the attack on Afghanistan stepped up the tempo, which reached fever pitch with the build-up to the attack on Iraq; an attack everyone instinctively knew had been decided on months before.

Before the war started, one of the best things that happened was an occupation of the Labour Party national recruitment office in North Shields on 7 February. Two people pretended to want to join the party and the rest covered the camera on the door and ran in. A group went upstairs to try and get a banner out of the window while others stayed on the ground floor. A third group stayed outside. The staff were a bit radgy at first but they calmed down and a few occupiers ended up talking to them about why they were doing it. Many of the staff seemed to think that they were 'non-political', and that the target was not legitimate (odd as it was national Labour Party office and most of the workers there were Labour Party members). The cops came but realised they could do nothing to remove the occupiers, so they stayed until the media turned up. After about two hours inside the occupiers agreed to leave, to a paparazzi-like reception from the media. All in all it went pretty well. Though it would have been better if the occupiers had made a bit more of a nuisance of themselves, it got some good media coverage (both ITV and BBC cameras showed up, as did three radio station and two newspapers) and there was a national Labour organiser up from London there at the time, so presumably the message got back to London as well…

But this was a relatively small group of people. Though there were others demos and stunts, the really interesting stuff happened on the day the war started. This is a report written at the time:

The first day of war in Iraq saw some of the largest and most militant activity that Newcastle has experienced in recent times. Events began at 8 am at the Haymarket. A crowd of eighty-odd that had gathered moved into the road and blocked traffic for forty-five minutes. Some gave out leaflets but most sat and chanted in the road. A banner was hung off a nearby church. There weren't as many of the usual suspects, due to some uncertainty regarding when the war had actually started. Fortunately there was a large group of school kids and sixth-formers from Heaton. Identified by their pink sashes, they were the most 'up for it' and they made it happen in the morning.

Eventually, some went to work, but the kids weren't finished yet. They marched to the Monument and spent half an hour chalking anti-war slogans all over the area. Dissatisfied with that, the kids moved off again… to the Metro. The cops had heard where they were going and accompanied them to the Metro doors. For some reason they didn't follow the group to Gateshead, where they made straight for the Tyne Bridge. Stopping traffic on the Tyne Bridge was child's play. No coppers showed for ages. Initially sat on the Gateshead side, people decided to take the middle of the bridge. As they moved off, a copper finally caught up. He drove past, stopped and tried to

make people stop, but everyone just walked past him. Nonplussed by this, he got out and grabbed the first person he saw. Then things started getting a bit hairy. Whilst the copper was tussling with his arrestee, several radgies had got out of their cars and were looking like they were gonna kick off. Then several cops vans showed and the fun was over.

The group then marched back into Newcastle, accompanied by police vans the whole way. At lunchtime, it met up with the main march and again stopped traffic at the Haymarket. The final event of the day came at a 6pm anti-war vigil. Addressed by the usual (and far too many) suspects, it looked like the crowd of perhaps 1,000 was going to end up bored to death. Despite this, a large group (several hundred) hung about till the bitter end and then marched up to the Haymarket and again stopped traffic by sitting in the road. Just when the cops had diverted the traffic (again), the crowd ran across the park by the church and sat in the road back where they'd just been; the cops didn't have a clue what to do.

With ten years of political activity in the city, I had never seen anything like it. A large crowd, mostly of people eighteen or under, were intent on causing disruption and testing the state's means of control. It seemed like the cops would never shift people, but then the church stepped in. A vicar appointed himself police liaison and informed the crowd that the police had identified ringleaders and would be making arrests if they didn't move. Instantly, a few people stood up saying 'I'm a ringleader, arrest me'... and there followed one of those incredible 'I am Spartacus' moments as everyone stood up shouting the same thing. Yet, it was clear that something had been killed. Maybe most weren't up for risking arrest, but there is absolutely no excuse for doing the police's dirty work for them, regardless of your motives. (The clergyman in question had been heard to say in the morning demo that people shouldn't sit in the road as they'd look like a bunch of anarchists, so it was clear, and predictable, where his sentiments lay).

The coup de grace was delivered by a representative of a similar organisation as the SWP regional organiser then announced that the demo was over and everyone should go to the next one. The way in which such a high level of solidarity, spontaneity and militancy was effectively killed by people who were meant to be supporters of the cause was nothing short of a disgrace. It definitely did not need to end that way.

Yet, this incredible day, did not herald the start of an even larger and more militant campaign of direct action. There was another rally-cum-march on the Saturday after war started but the police refused to let the crowd march up Northumberland street as it was busy with shoppers. They cordoned it off but people went through various shops and the march kind of happened anyway. It dispersed after a 'vigil' at the war memorial and there weren't enough people to do a sit-down on the road again. Most of the kids weren't there, and they were the ones who had made it so successful the previous Thursday. An attempt by a few people to sit in the road ended in predictable failure as angry taxi drivers jumped out of their cars. It was also a Newcastle home match and a lot of the fans were pretty abusive. Since the war actually started a polarisation had occurred, as might have been expected.

After that relative failure I still thought that the success of the first day's action could be repeated or even bettered but, unfortunately, I was mistaken. The subsequent Thursday and Saturday meetings began to decline in size and militancy. By May Day things had reached a real low. It was the most depressing May Day march I can remember (no mean feat given previous marches' ability to induce feelings of total despair). It was pathetic and embarrassing marching through town. Did the shite way the first night's actions were killed-off put people off doing anything similar? What is certain is we didn't see that same level of militancy again. The experience of that night left a bitter taste in my mouth and, I imagine, in that of many others.

For an all-too-brief moment we had glimpsed something special in Newcastle. The political impact on those who became politically engaged for the first time is something that can and will last. In the north east one of the most important features of the anti-war actions was that they were supported and often inspired by people who had not taken direct action before. It was great to see, for example, a load of kids running onto the 'blinking eye' bridge and locking-on, when we'd heard that a naval training vessel was due on the Tyne (and consequently needed the bridge to be raised). It was the kids of Heaton that took the Tyne Bridge and the youth of all Tyneside seemed to be at the mass road blockade that first evening of war. The youth gave the demos a lot of energy and inspiration, and they were up for a lot more than just marching and chanting slogans. Another positive development has been a lot of young people coming into contact with anarchist ideas and setting up groups. Now there are Anarchist Youth Network people in places like rural and very Tory Hexham, and other groups elsewhere who are now interested in anarchist ideas. (e-mail northeast@anarchistyouth.net, see website: www.anarchistyouth.net).

The internal politics of the Stop the War Coalition was predictably messy. A coalition of peace activists, liberals, Greens, lefties of almost all 57 varieties, anarchists, some old Labour people (I think), hippies and other assorted ne'er-do-wells, it was always likely to end in tears. It often did. And when push came to shove it almost always seemed to be the SWP and a few hangers-on versus the rest. A group outside of the STWC did the Labour Party occupation and it got slagged by some at the following STWC meeting. The SWPers accused the occupiers of being "super heroes", "elitist", and "petit bourgeois" etc. (the same old unoriginal and frankly meaningless platitudes you'd expect). The SWP didn't like it but it was being left out that really rankled especially as the occupation appeared to be one of the more effective things done in the region.

Then there was the repeated SWP attempts to push through their re-organisation idea. The effect of this would have been to create a 'committee' with a handful of 'elected' (read SWP-appointed) people who would make all the decisions and co-ordinate the whole regional campaign. It seems that it's more democratic to have this committee then it is for anyone who wants to get involved just coming along and having their input. One of the most hilarious aspects of it all was the SWP claim to represent more people and therefore deserve more voting power/influence over what went on. If an SWP member is a trade union branch secretary, ergo he or she represents all the people who are in that branch in whatever meeting they happen to be taking part in. The truth is, like the rest of us, they represent themselves, their party and no one else. Anyway, they argued that at present the STWC was not working efficiently in the region and that it needed co-ordination by this committee. Bar one or two others, like a student who thought that a 'command structure' [!] was an essential part of any organisation, the rest argued that it worked well enough as it was: the problems that did arise could be sorted out as and when necessary; the committee idea meant putting control into the hands of a few people at the expense of everyone who wasn't on the committee; specific events could, as was already happening, be organised by sub-groups of those interested. The first time the committee idea came up, it was not decisively dealt with, though it was obviously unpopular outside the ranks of the SWP.

Failing to get what they wanted inside the STWC, the SWP attempted to establish another organisation they could control; a north east 'people's parliament' briefly found its way into an uncaring world. It soon vanished and another attempt at getting the committee adopted was made. The same arguments were had, that it was about control not democracy or organisation, that we should be doing things, not wasting time arguing about how we should be doing things. After heated and at times very comic debate, it was voted down. The STWC was operating in a relatively 'anarchist' manner. With no formal hierarchy, it was characterised by openness, equality and democracy. Of course, it could have been better, but most of the problems were down to people not using some initiative and not communicating. Most of the complaints came from SWP members, as if they were deliberately trying to show that the structure didn't work. The SWP fervently believes you can't organise without people telling you what to do. They were going to try and impose their 'top-down' model and show us (a) we needed leaders and (b) they were the best people for the job. Though a committee would stifle initiative and creativity and disempower people who were wanting to do stuff, it would have given control to the SWP.

There are many lessons that need to be understood or things that require thinking about by anarchists, arising from the anti-war campaign and its activities:

(1) Spontaneity, often from people new to 'political activity', can be a very effective tool if you want to keep the police on their toes and cause maximum disruption. There is no need for marshalling, corralling and generally being controlled *a la* SWP.

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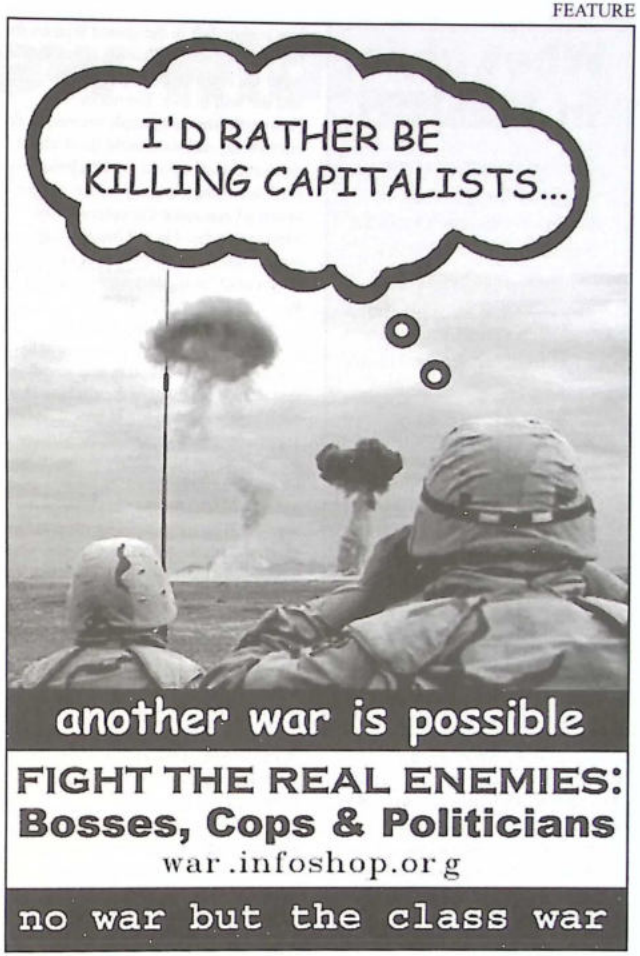

Resistance

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of Resistance means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of Resistance, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to 'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL.

Better still, take a bundle to distribute! AF Ireland produce their own regular newssheet, Resistance Ireland. It is available from their address:
Anarchist Federation (Ireland)
Po Box 505 Belfast
BT12 6BQ
Phone: 07951 079719

What goes in *ORGANISE!*

Organise! **hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.**
If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

(2) If the SWP or other authoritarian groups try and control direct action, then ways are needed to prevent what happened to end the demo on the first day of war. In the immediate aftermath of that debacle, some argued that loud-hailers should not be allowed on marches. But it's not really the loud-hailers, but the people using them who cause the problem. Ways and means need to be found of stopping would-be leaders from attempting to assert a dubious authority on proceedings, but without appearing like other would-be leaders. Someone getting up and using the loudhailer to say 'sit tight and ignore the guy telling you to go home' is in some ways guilty of the same thing. We need to find ways of combating those who elect themselves to sell us out. Maybe the kids, who were the main inspiration of the days' events, will learn to deal with this in the future... Answers on a postcard, please.

(3) It was clear that the old formula of 'big public meeting, with twenty-five different speakers' is of very limited use. Once everyone who likes the sound of their own voice too much has had a go, there often seemed less people left in the crowd than on the platform. Those remaining invariably wore the expression of people who had lost the will to live. Events in Newcastle showed people wanted to do something, and we should think about ways in which we can make all this stuff more participatory for the people involved and more disruptive to the powers that be. They'll happily have people boring other people at the Monument for as long as we can bear it.

(4) Though the STWC has people in it who we'd never normally choose to work with, it is important that anarchists involve themselves in such organisations: to get anarchist arguments about organisation across and to attempt to frustrate authoritarian ideas. Some people will come across anarchist ideas for the first time and many will be influenced by them rather than go with the SWP. Sadly, even after having seen how the SWP operated at close hand, some still chose to join them in the aftermath of war. Due to all the Stop the War activity, some people had shelved a pre-war idea for a conference to establish a new direct action group. The new group eventually emerged too late to prevent at least some of the anti-war people getting mopped-up by the SWP. Learn from our mistakes.

(5) Having people you know and trust with hand-held video cameras when doing some kinds of activity is very useful. A lad was arrested on the Tyne Bridge for obstructing and was also charged with assaulting a police officer. He didn't do it, needless-to-say, and we have a video of the whole arrest that shows quite clearly that he didn't. The case was recently adjourned and apparently the copper started saying he was ill and couldn't attend court when told we had a video as part of the defence. The case was adjourned and it is likely that the assault charges will be dropped thanks to the video (which the copper incidentally tried to illegally snatch off the lad operating it on the day). Another good aspect of the presence of 'youth' at these demos was the police's obvious uncertainty about whether to arrest them or not. The cops would obviously have preferred some ageing hippies to rough-up instead.

(6) The lad in the Tyne Bridge arrest had support with his case. This did not happen in an earlier case when a lad was arrested and manhandled by a load of coppers for writing 'Justice Not Vengeance' on the Monument. A lot of the people said they'd not go to any more rallies as he'd been 'violent' etc. He subsequently got very little support from coalition members and was found guilty of criminal damage and fined £50, the cost, apparently, of removing the chalk. Though the STWC did pay his costs (it needed to do something with all the money it'd been accumulating, after all), he didn't want to involve himself in it further; understandable, given his treatment. You have to be prepared for this kind of thing when working in such a wide and diverse kind of coalition.

To sum up, anarchists should be in STWCs and arguing an anarchist case. Fight the authoritarians as much as possible and try to show by practical example that anarchist methods are the most effective way of organising. Those new to political activity will hopefully learn something from anarchists, and we, in turn, will definitely learn from and be inspired by, them.

AF pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It is available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek and now, thanks to our Austrian comrades, in German. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.
The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation is also available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.
If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?
German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.
Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Interview with *Neka*

On June 19th we had the opportunity to interview Neka, a representative of the Argentinian autonomous movement. She is a member of the piqueteros, the movement of the unemployed, so called from the Argentinian word for blockade.

Though they are best known for direct action, they carry out much wider projects, developing neighbourhood networks, education and health intiatives and microcompanies, self organised workshops in which the unemployed make first what they need then products for sale to get some income. This is especially important since there has been no dole or benefits in Argentina until recently. Even the very limited dole came as a result of the direct action of the piqueteros.

Argentina made headlines a year and a half ago, due to the collapse of the economy and political institutionals. Millions of Argentinians lost their savings and money in December 2001 when the economic policies implemented at the orders of the IMF and World Bank and others crashed; this certainly increased resistance. But the struggle of those affected by harsh living conditions has been a constant for a long time. The state continues to decine due to a lack of legitimacy and resources, abandoning responsibility for health and social services for instance. This makes self-organisation a necesssity for most Argentinians, who need to build their own structures so they can go on with their every day lives.

This has provoked a debate about the role of the state. Though most of the time services are delegated to it, there's no need to do so. Self-organised workers can do the work, providing health, education and other services to higher standards. After all it's us, the workers, who do the real work and not state bureaucrats. But while the state collapses and retreats from a lot of its supposed duties, it has never had any problem to keep up, or even increase, the level of repression, thus disclosing its real nature and priorities. Even in the days of December 2001, when governments were made and unmade in a matter of days, if not hours, the only fully working state organisation was the riot police, which killed many demonstrators.

It's difficult to think of any possible solution for the Argentinian crisis in the foreseeable future, especially via capitalism. The fact that international organisations such as the World Bank or the WTO are demanding more of the same policies that led to the crash, and that international banks are pressing for debts to be repaid, is not helping at all. Through these last years, only the will of the people to resist, finding new ways of social organisation, has allowed them to keep their lives going on. Even if it had a lot of problems and set-backs, as we would expect when someone is exploring new ways, it was a very important and kept hospitals, schools and factories open. Now the bosses and the state are coming back, as if nothing had happened, to reclaim the companies or areas that they left when the crisis struck. Their only argument for this is coming from the barrel of a gun. There's still a future of struggle for the Argentinian people ahead. We can only hope that we can support and help them.

Interview with Neka, representative of the Autonomous Argentinian Movement.

Could you explain to us who are the piqueteros, how they are organised and how they first appeared?
Let me introduce myself. I'm Neka and I am a member of the MTD Solano. We are part of a coordination of different movements called MTD Aníbal Verón. We began to get organised at the end of 1997, mainly out of meetings and assemblies in the neighbourhoods, as we began to be badly hit by unemployment. That was our starting point.

These assemblies and meetings, did they begin spontaneously, or were they an initiative taken by some existing political group?
No. Most of us had met each other through the every day reality of the neighbourhood, as we were engaged in different projects. For example, I was part of a team working on health issues in our barrio. We had been in touch, there was a bond between us. And there were also some compañeros who had been involved in other projects in the area. When we first decided to get together and discuss the problems brought by unemployment, most of us had a deep and sound

knowledge of our barrio.

So there was a previous experience of organising at a local level?

Yes. The area where I come from, San Francisco Solano, is a town of 80,000 people. All the barrios are the products of asentamientos, the squatting of land to solve the housing problem. That started in the 80s, so there is a history of struggle, very strong and hard in this area. We had already been doing together different actions, assessing different ways of getting organised and of solving the main problems in life.

The piqueteros are represented all over Argentina...

Yes. It's a very diverse movement. This word, piquetero, we never branded ourselves like that. It started being used by the media, that is the state, in a disrespectful and pejorative way, to imply that we were criminals, subversive elements. When we began to get organised there was still a middle class, which doesn't exist today any more, and it was really hopeful, waiting to see what capitalism and neoliberalism had to offer. So when we began to blockade roads and occupy public buildings, it was a very shocking thing. Since then the social and political situation in the country has affected wider sections of the population. They have deeply felt the consequences and awakened from the golden dream of capitalism, the dream of progress for some through the wage labour, the exploitation of the rest; comfort, consumerism...

Was there a particular time at which you decide to start with these actions, road blockades, etc? Was it from the start, or was there first a process of radicalisation that you went through?

There's not a single unified movement, there are lots of different ones and each one of them has its own way of organising. For some, the piquete, the blockade on the road, is the most important stuff. They look for a more media-focused way of building up the movement or the political party. For us the main thing is behind the blockade. As the MTD Solano we say that the road blockade or squatting a public building is only a means, and the most important things are happening in the barrio, at the assemblies, through the collective way of making decissions. Before we do any action we discuss a lot in the meetings why we are going to do it. What is the meaning, for example, of blockading a factory or a mill, places where the raw materials that we need to produce or to feed ourselves are kept. Before we squat a Carrefour, the multinational supermarket, we discuss the meaning of this capital concentration, as well as why the food is concentrated there, and not where it should be. Direct action and project construction in our barrio come together; we construct every day in our neighbourhood what we demand in the street.

ORGANISE! on the net

Articles from Organise! can now be found on the internet.
Address: http://www.afed.org.uk
You can also E-Mail us at anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

What's the impact of all these projects in the lifes of those taking part in them? Has it come together with an evolution in political ideas, in the nature of demands made?

I think there was a very important break with traditional politics and political issues, and it is precisely related to all this. We've been through a lot of different organisational practices, lots of experiences and what we've finally learnt is that we can build up better projects without leaders. We don´t need any one speaking on our behalf, we all can be voices and express every single thing. They're our problems and its our decisions to solve them. The fact that we have education, popular education, as a central axis of our project, allowed us to open space for discussion and thought, to start building up new social relations, to deeply know each other, so we could feel we are all part of everything we are building. Getting back our dignity depends only on ourselves and not on a boss or anyone else imposing on us a way to live.

What you have said about popular education, is there any practical project on that, or do you mean more like sharing the experience of social construction?

No. As we understand society it is based upon domination relationships, so anything coming from its institutions will be based on this same principle of domination. Education is education for domination. Same as the family. So when we propose social change we have to begin at the beginning and devise new relationships. I think this is the challenge. When we decided that we had to produce our own foods, to struggle against the monoply of food production we understood that new relantioships are born of this practice, through discussing all these issues. And also horizontality and autonomy, and all the things that are not abstract ideas or theories, but a practical issue and a process. Popular education, the dynamics of the meetings and assemblies, are all part of the effort to change these relationships.

What are the relations of the movement with more traditional forms of the left? Have they tried to use you to achieve their goals?

I don't know how it is in other places, but that's a usual thing in Argentina. When there is something interesting happening any where, the parties first either criticise or try to manipulate it. So there's not only the need to fight against the right, but also against attitudes and deformations from the left. We understand that there are areas in which we can work together, like against the debt or repression. This causes problems for those of us who believe we need to build the movement up from autonomy as much as for those who believe in a more classical way. But we think from a very different logic and the new society we can think of is very different from theirs. I think they'll have to learn. They've gone through a lot of setbacks and they'll finally learn that there are ways that don't work out, as they became as authoritarian as all that they criticise.

Have you ever had any problems to keep the assemblies independent?

A lot. We are all the time being criticised, and there are always attempts to manipulate and infiltrate us. We are all the time discussing how to take care, not only on a personal level, but also of the construction of our projects.

Could you tell as a bit of how all this is practically implemented, how the assemblies work and how they are co-ordinated between each other?

There are different levels of co-ordination. There are seven barrios in the MTD Solano and on certain projects they work together, like on health, education, productivity or economic projects. Through delegates we put together initiatives in these areas but also plans for the struggle and more. These delegates meet once a week, from different places and areas and they represent the decisions made in their assemblies. Also the MTD Solano itself has its own delegates, who meet with others and coordinate all this effort and all this experience through the MTD Aníbal Verón. Some times they may be leaders or decision makers. In our case the delegations are taken in turns and can be recalled. If they don't voice the decision made by the assembly they can be recalled.

Was all this co-ordination at a wider level this way from a start or has it evolved and gone through changes? Was there a discussion on how to have it put in place?

I think it was the needs of the movement at different times which made us say to ourselves: OK, lets stop discussing political differences and strategies and lets co-ordinate a bit of struggle against the issues hitting us hard, such as the repression. In less than a year we've had three compañeros killed in the MTD Aníbal Verón. This week makes a year since the Avellaneda massacre, in which two of them were assasinated. This repression made us stop and think that we had to coordinate a struggle against it. Also the affair of the corralito, the expropiation by the state of the savings of the people, we could see it was not only affecting those deprived of their savings but also the every day life of the whole country. I think that reality itself has imposed different levels of coordination on us.

Has there been an evolution in the level of the repression that you've had to confront?

I think that the repression in Argentina has never ended. The dictatorship has never ended. There's been a change in the nature of repression, which is now much more subtle and much more dangerous, such as different ways of social control and the means they employ to control the social movements. I think that the state is repression, that the essence of the system is criminal. When the state leaves millions homeless, without any benefits or health service, that is repression. When kids are starving to death every day, dying of malnutrition or bad health, that is repression. These policies are repression, economics is represion. Of course this comes along with batoning and shooting those demanding in the streets an end to it, asking for what we have right to. An interesting side of repression lately, is trying to have all the popular struggles become part of the institutional process, searching for every mean to buy the leaders. That's why we don't have leaders, because in the end they always agree to something the people doesn´t want, something the assemblies don't want. This is the more subtle way, and through propaganda, criminalisation, through new laws and organised groups. They are taking advantage of the situation to organise alternative groups in the barrios, paying youngsters from the area to work with the police and the state, killing militants, chasing people down. There have been more than 300 different cases of faked robberies involving shootings where some militant is killed. This is organised by the police itself. For us it's all part of the same military dictatorship that ruled in the 70s, only in a different fashion, with the mask of democracy.

So we can say that every state, either a dictatorship or a democracy, always follows the same pattern, that of repressing social movements.

There´s a change in the form, in the shape, but the essence remains the same. It´s a matter of detail.

Iit seems to be a situation of class exploitation in both forms of government, and the role of the state is to ensure and protect the privileges of the rulers, the rich and powerful.

Of course. As I see it the true democracy is when we all have a posibility of saying what we want, of choosing how we want to live, without it being impossed on us. As long as these domination relationships exists, as long as there is an imposition of how to do things, there cannot be any democracy, no matter how popular a government is.

Ddo you also keep in touch with other types of social movement, like the workers running the factories, or any other?

Yeah. The network of squatted factories is very diverse as well. There are about 200 of these and a lot of different proposals on how to run and defend them. But there is also a network of co-ordination between them the squatted factories, the assemblies and the piqueteros. Recently there's a strong co-ordination with other squatting groups as well, such as teachers, doctors, etc. It's a very interesting process.

Do you think that your movement served as a model for other groups that began to get organised after theDecember 2001 crisis?

I think so, I think it's been useful even though we don't believe it's right to become a model or create a dogma, nothing like that. But I think there are experiences that multiply themselves and get diversified, which is very interesting. We're always having comrades from other places coming along to visit, to stay with us for a while, work and see, and they're very happy with it.

Do you co-ordinate with anarchist groups? Are they simply organised as members of the assemblies?

No, there were moments in Argentina of a very strong anarchist struggle, such as those of the so-called tragic week or the Patagonia Rebelde, when the first unions in the Patagonia were established. This influence is very strong in areas of the movement such as education, organisation. We are also

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

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All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from AF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

interested in the Spanish Civil War and its different experiences. There are some compañeros at the MTD Solano who come from the anarchist struggle. We have big similarities with the historical way of building up an organisation. But nowadays in Argentina we don´t keep any big relationship. We do with individuals, but not with any anarchist organisation.

What do you think the role of globalisation, and international capitalism, has been in the crisis that Argentina is going through?

I think that even though national economic institutions and the state have responsibility for everything happening, I still think that the pressure has been on a global basis, that the interests of big capital have out this pressure on. They have effects in countries like Argentina but also on everything happening in Africa, in Asia, and on some countries of Europe itself. It's a conscious policy, planned and executed by the likes of the International Monetary Fund, the big corporations.

How do you see the attempts to create an oposition to this neoliberalist project by building up an nternational antiglobalisation movement?

We take part in a lot of forums, for instance the Porte Allegre summit, meeting people from all over the world. But we also meet many others at a regional or continental level. We find them very interesting spaces, but we also think that there's a point in stressing the issue of co-ordinating only that which can be constructed or practised. There's a risk of having only speeches, agreements, theories and when we come back home, nothing happens. The system is preying on and living in our spaces, in our every day life. It gives us an education to make us obey, it imposes the way our clothes are, and where we have to live. You and I cannot choose the place, the house or the barrio where we want to live. I think that the struggle against this taming, this domestication or discipline that we all receive so make us obey the system, that's what we have to co-ordinate afterwards.

Try to get back the decision making on our own lifes.

I think so, yeah.

Talking about practical stuff, what do you think we could do from here, Europe, to support the struggling people of Argentina?

Where we get strength and hope is from meeting other struggling people, or those who are doing things in their areas, proposing a new way of life. There's also the sharing of resources. Usually here, as well as in Spain or Italy, there's more resources, things that we lack. Support, and sharing things as much as we can, I think that's a very important issue. There's also the repression. I thing it's been reduced thanks to world wide demonstrations, even when it was very strong. Though we don't expect much from international organisations, protests and demonstrations in front of them, of embassies and so on does call attention to our situation.

If we look into the future, do you think there's any solution for the crisis in Argentina within capitalism or would any solution have to go through a radical redefinition of everything?

At the moment in Argentina we have a big void due to the lack of legitimacy that the state has had lately. But at the same time the system is very enduring and goes on creating conditions for it to survive and thrive. This is happening with the new government but it doesn´t mean that the right solution is being applied, for us. There´s no valid answer from any reform or reproduction of what we had before.

Can this void of power that state crisis has brought along be filled by a network of all the struggling sectors? Do you think that such a coordination could be the embryo of a new society , organised in a different way?

We, at least, are not thinking with the same logic that we are used to. I believe it is possible to imagine a different kind of society. We at MTD Solano don´t have any faith in a revolution employing the same methods of the bourgeoisie to govern. There must be a different logic.

Yeah, could spreading this way of organising, according to these different logics, could it take over the state, so at the end you get a network of assemblies managing the every day life of the workers?

Yeah, I think that would be the logical way, wouldn't it? Because that's the only way every one can take a decision on what affects them.

Finally, how do you think that this is going to evolve? The movement itself, also the social and economic situation in Argentina, what do you think is going to happen, and what would you like to happen?

I don't think the conditions are ripe for a popular government, no matter how much they want it. I think that, for a while, they´ll use some mechanism to create some social consensus, to gain the support they need to stay in power. But at some point it's going to kick off again. They are using a lot of tools to create hope in the people, as they did when they brought Lula, Chavez, Castro. But all this, at least as we see it in the MTD Solano, is simply a mask to fool us. In fact, I think that this government is already having a lot of problems carrying on. We don't expect any important change, any radical one, of any good for the people. The challenges, at least for us, are to go on getting strong in the barrios, making a sound organisation, analysing the new situations in depth and fighting creatively the situations that arise, and don't let ourselves become dogmatic, either.

So a future of struggle.

Yeah, the struggle goes on.

"I think that the state is repression, that the essence of the system is criminal. When the state leaves millions homeless, without any benefits or health service, that is repression."

"...there were moments in Argentina of a very strong anarchist struggle when the first unions in the Patagonia were established"

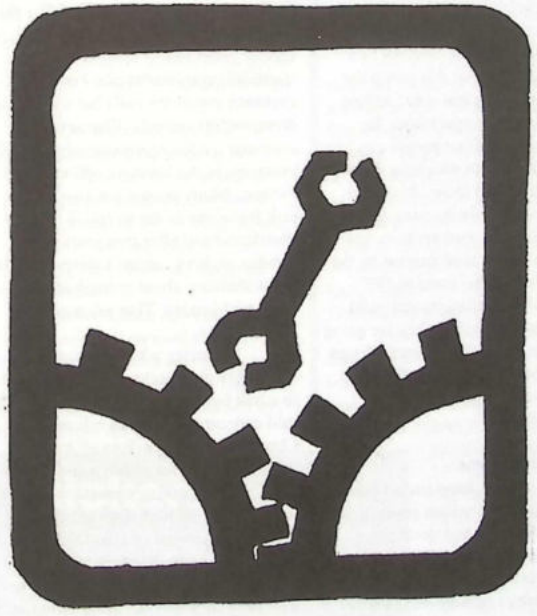
Class Struggle in the *New Economy*

You might have noticed if you've read any of the bosses' own publications (The Economist, Financial Times, Business Week etc) that they are pushing the idea of a 'New Economy'.

An economy based on the latest technology and IT, which has somehow overcome all the contradictions of the 'old economy' and developed a fundamentally harmonious basis; workers and bosses co-operating for the common good, the end of workplace struggle.

It's the same self-serving myth the bosses have always dished out when they want to make changes that benefit them and harm us, right from the start of the Industrial Revolution. Marx said 150 years ago that "It would be possible to write a whole history of the inventions made since 1830 for the sole purpose of providing capital with weapons against working-class revolt", which is essentially what is happening today. The bosses are trying to use work-place technology against us, whilst simultaneously claiming it's for our benefit. A look at what is actually happening in the 'new economy' will dispel some of these myths. You have to look at call-centres and similar workplaces and the production and assembly plants that make the components for this new technology, not just information workers or high-paid software designers.

The first thing to emphasise is that the development of the New Economy is *deliberate*. It is the logical result of mostly US state-funded development programs that explicitly sought to create a pro-management environment through the use of technology. The early electronic plants in the 1950s were used as laboratories for road-testing new management plans to deal with the collective strength of what became known as "the mass worker" - a workplace community that had gained strength from the sheer numbers of people concentrated in one plant. The concept of 'team-management' grew from this experiment and was exported to other industries most notably the Detroit car factories and steel industries. It's not only the advertised product that the 'new economy' is selling - it also sells plans to minimise worker resistance and new ways of making us work harder for longer for less pay whilst watching us every second. We should keep a very careful eye on what is happening in the 'new economy' as it may very well be happening close to home before too long - as the spread of just-in-time production, toyotism, self-management, work circles and other management ploys have demonstrated. So how have workers been responding to all this?



Worker Resistance

Despite the myths of a peaceful workplace there have been numerous examples of class struggle taking place in the hi-tech sector - practically from its origins. There's a number of struggles that seem to be of particular significance because of the areas in which they took place, how they were organised, and the opportunities for spreading struggle among other parts of the working. The 1993 strike by workers at the Versatronex circuit board assembly plant in Sunnyvale, Silicon Valley was of great significance as it was the first to take place among production workers (mainly female Mexican immigrants) who are the basis of the 'new economy' but who remain

hidden behind the scenes in favour of stories about dot-com entrepreneurs. These workers were employed in a sweat-shop: forced to work damagingly long hours, with the usual problems that this causes in the family, at very high line speeds, in unhealthy conditions with no medical plan and with very little pay or job security. This is life at the most basic of levels of the 'new economy' - looks very much like life in the 'old economy' doesn't it? No stock options here! The workers eventually struck and managed to spread the struggle to other factories in Silicon Valley and to other immigrant workers in unskilled jobs, janitors in these hi-tech factories being a prime example. The *reality* of conditions in the 'new economy' met with a worker response straight out of the old days of class struggle, of the boss and the worker having nothing in common. The work conditions allowed the workers to socialise and talk of their problems together and then come up with collective solutions. There was recognition of the common problems felt by the women and the social solidarity to do something about them. This contrasts with the better paid end of the hi-tech sector where one of the most common complaints is the social isolation felt by workers who no longer have to turn up at a definite place for a definite time and who consequently feel they have to battle the boss alone or even that there is no point in struggling at all.

Microserfs

Moving up the scale (so to speak) we have the programmers - the people satirised as 'micro serfs' in Douglas Coupland's novel of the same name. A recent study by the University of California made the claim that these jobs are the modern equivalent of the 19th Century factory. These workers are a clear example of how the bosses myths of "modern flexible working, untied by geographical office boundaries, able to work on their own initiative and offered stock options in their firms." has been used against the workforce. The reality is that these people are often forced into working 16 hours a day to meet deadlines (in some states overtime legislation has been abolished), and are forced to constantly update their skills (not paid for by the company) in order to stay in work. Resentment came to a head in the last few years with the bursting of the dot.com bubble, the transfer of jobs to 'developing' countries and the mass immigration of IT workers prepared to work for lower wages from those same countries. But "when the economic crisis hit, they found themselves with few collective guarantees, they were cast to their individual fates". There have now been a number of initiatives by these workers to form some form of collective organisation - trade unions or interest-based associations - to defend their interests and the lessons of social solidarity that the Versatronex workers learned are now being taken up by other sections of the 'new economy'. However much of this still aims to protect individual careers rather then improve conditions for workers as a whole. One thing that this group has become aware of is that it has unique skills which management takes for granted - assuming that people can be easily replaced – but which they can use when deadlines loom. It's a fact that is increasingly being used to gain concessions; these workers have not yet had their skills appropriated by the bosses. Whether this leads to 19th Century-style craft unions and guild organisations or whether they are going to recognise that their disputes are part of a wider network of struggles is going to be a key question over the coming years.

Telecommunications

Call centres stand somewhere in the middle ground: neither production work nor designing and developing original plans, they are (along with data-entry clerks and similar) stuck in boring repetitive factory-like jobs but their tools are no longer the lathe but the pc. They are probably the most monitored workforce going, with constant intrusive supervision, almost every single task broken down into timed actions and compulsory overtime. Unsurprisingly this has led to well above average workforce turnover, sometimes a high as 80%, as stress levels become just too high. August 2000 saw 87,000 telecommunications workers strike against Verizon Communications in the US over forced overtime, job stress and job security. Forced overtime was the key issue: in some states management can force people to work 15 hours a week overtime, more in certain months, while another (New Jersey) has *no limits* on the amount of overtime that can be forced on workers. As one striking technician put it, "Management can come up to you as you are getting ready to leave and require you to work another two hours, or before your day off they can require you to work four hours of it." This is now the norm throughout the industry - not an exceptional case at all. Other complaints were the *speed* of work and the *supervision* - a striker wrote : "For every call that comes in we have to 'assume the sale.' If we do not try to find a need and sell the customer a new service then we are disciplined. Depending on the supervisor, you could get a suspension. All of this and completing the repair or customer service order has to be done within specified time constraints. For a customer repair the calls have to be down to 300 seconds. *Five seconds over and we are reprimanded… Mostly everyone in the business office is on Prozac*. Many people are also out on sick leave due to the stress. I transferred out after two years. On Sunday nights I couldn't sleep because I was thinking about going back to work on Monday. That job was hell."

The strike which seemed so solid after two weeks out was brought to a halt by another throwback from the 'old economy' - a union sell out. The Communication Workers of America (CWA) split the workforce and all but ran a strike-breaking operation in areas where they met with determined opposition, imposing a deal that actually made the workers job even more stressful. The lesson in the 'new economy' remains the same as in the old: don't trust union bureaucrats, rely on your own autonomous strength and solidarity in collective action. In the last years or so there have been strikes in call-centres all over the world (and a possibly quite large one looming at BT) as workers come to realise that many companies are now almost totally reliant on these modern day sweatshops. They are in fact a weakness that can be exploited, a point where capital is particularly vulnerable.

Common to all the above sectors is stress. A recent TUC study has shown that: "Workers with stressful jobs are more than twice as likely to die from heart disease. An individuals mental health deteriorates when a change in workload results in higher demands, less control and reduced support. Poor management planning and organisation can lead to heart disease. Working for unreasonable and unfair bosses leads to dangerously high blood pressure. Workers are smoking, drinking and 'slobbing out' to deal with workplace stress. Long-term work-related stress is worse for the heart than aging 30 years or gaining 40lbs in weight." This is the 'new economy', eating up the working class just as surely as did the 'old economy'

The boss talk of class harmony and co-operation is being used to deny all of this. But the fact is that a society that is organised around the capital-labour relation can never escape class struggle, can never escape from bosses vs workers. It may be old but its still true:

"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth."

What's Going On At *Bombardier?*

On August 8th 2003, Maurice Nell, business correspondent with the Belfast Telegraph wrote:

"The airline industry in the United States is moving back into profit, according to the latest figures from the seven major carriers. The data is good news for aircraft manufacturers including Bombardier *Aerospace in Northern Ireland where 1,050 are facing redundancy".*

Three days later, the same correspondent, in the same newspaper, wrote:

"Bombardier is to sell its business jet financing business for £212m to a subsidiary of United States industrial giant General Electric. The move is a key part of the aerospace company's 'action plan' to get back into profit after recording a loss of £280m last year."

So, the airline industry in North America is 'moving back into profit' and this is reported as 'good news' for Bombardier workers in the north. But in order 'to get back into profit', Bombardier are prepared to throw 1,050 workers onto the scrap-heap. Aye, great news! These losses can be added to the 2000 jobs (or 6% of its workforce in its aerospace division) lost in September 2002 and the further 1200 lost in March this year.

Now, of course, none of this is Bombardier's fault. They are, like everyone else, merely suffering the same downturn in the airline industry worldwide caused by, the media pundits say, September 11th, the SARS outbreak, and the war in Iraq. Well, let's look at these each in turn.

First of all, September 11th. That's September 11th 2001, folks. Now, if you bother to take a look at Bombardier's website, you'll discover that: *Its (Bombardier Aerospace) revenues for the fiscal year ended Jan. 31, 2002 stood at CAN $21.6 billion.* So, only four months after 9/11, Bombardier's profit margins are, as usual, going through the roof.

But what about SARS? Well, if memory serves, the SARS outbreak affected people, and hence consumers, in two major urban centres, Toronto and Hong Kong. If Bombardier's business focussed on commercial flights between North America and South–East Asia, I could see how profits could be affected. But Bombardier, according to their website are:

…a diversified manufacturing and services company, and a world leading manufacturer of business jets, regional aircraft, rail transportation equipment and motorized recreational products. Bombardier Inc. also provides financial services and asset management in business areas aligned with its core expertise. Headquartered in Montréal, the Corporation has a workforce of some 80,000 people in 24 countries throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific.

To put it simply, Bombardier Inc. are prepared for any eventuality in the vagaries of global capitalism. A temporary, minor fluctuation in profits in two countries is not going to do them much economic damage.

And so, the war in Iraq and the war against terror. The truth is that Bombardier are profiting from defence contracts handed out by the U.S. military to willing recipients. Recently, the Aerospace Industries of America (which includes Bombardier) joined the Canadian Council of Chief Executives that supports Canadian participation in continental anti-ballistic missile programmes.

Bombardier also got the deal with the US army TACOM to build transportable bridges for the next time the U.S. Army needs to cross the Rubicon (1).

Stickers

The Anarchist Federation has produced a new run of stickers. If you'd like to receive a few, drop us a line. For large quantities, we'd appreciate a donation.

Manchester AF have produced a set of their own stickers in tasteful black and red. They are available by emailing Manchester AF.

To have a look both sets of stickers, visit the Manchester AF website: www.af-north.org

Add to this the fact that the Bombardier 415 is the world's leader in putting out forest and mountain fires (think blazing oil wells) and you realise how much the company has fallen on hard times.

But to return to the workers facing the sack. In June, Bombardier in the north called for 'new working practices' (more mumbo-jumbo from our friend at the 'Telegraph') and a 'pay restraint' (re: pay cut, or no pay) for workers at its three manufacturing plants. This, in spite of the fact that, according to Nell: *demand has grown steadily in the last three months and July produced profits for most US airlines, according to analysts.*

So, in the middle of those three months of profits, Bombardier decides to downsize the lives of over 1000 workers. This a month after they secured a contract worth more than $2.2bn with US Airways for a mixture of its 50 and 75 seat regional jets. So again, four months after 9/11, Bombardier reported greatly increased profits yet is blaming that event on the need to get rid of 1000 workers today. Just how dumb do they think we are?

5500 workers at Bombardier rejected a proposed four-year agreement which would have resulted in a pay freeze in the first year in return for employment assurances and subsequent talks between the manufacturing, science and finance union, Amicus, broke down because union management refused to Bombardier's decision to scrap apprenticeships and the payment of holiday entitlements.

Anarchists throughout the north of Ireland believe that the workers at Bombardier's three plants should be supported in their struggle against the bosses. We believe there is no need for ANY redundancies given the fact that Bombardier is NOT losing profits in the north, but simply wants to create MORE profits by relocating elsewhere. We hope to be participating in a campaign to raise awareness of the plight of these workers. Contact us for more information.

1. From Meet Canada the Global Arms Dealer by Stephen James Kerr

Trade Unionism and *Industrial Organisation*

Anarchist Federation (Ireland) and Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation Statement on Trade Unionism and Industrial Organisation

The Role of Trade Unions

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) and Anarchist Federation (AF), as organisations of class-struggle anarchists, agree that trade unions cannot be used, in the long term, as vehicles of revolutionary activity in Ireland.

Here, as elsewhere, trade unions are top-down organisations of bureaucrats and workers where those at the top (the bureaucrats and trade union elite) stifle the hopes of those at the bottom (the workers) and impede their natural desire for an improvement in working conditions. This elite is nothing but a management board of full-time, permanent officials motivated by self-interest alone, with even less interest in rocking the industrial boat. Trade union officialdom will not, for example, involve workers in long-term strike action that would interrupt the flow of precious union dues. In short, trade unions are not controlled by their members; it is they who control. The fact that trade unions like SIPTU have scrapped notions of one-man, one vote, and will not even countenance changes in the ways they are organised, is testament to the stranglehold union bureaucracies have over workers.

As capitalism is an exploitative system where workers produce the wealth, but do not receive it, trade unions, by promoting collective bargaining, are also promoting and legitimising exploitation. In recent times, the 'social partnership' entered into by trade union leaders and bosses has made this even more self-evident, while Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) are paving the way for private investment in the public sector. In the meantime, trade unions are overseeing the run down of our public services which will be ultimately paid for by an increase in our rates and by the introduction of water charges in the north.

However, the AF and ASF do not believe that its members should not join trade unions. While we realise that they will never be able to step onto the revolutionary stage, we also acknowledge the benefits to be gained by union membership in the short term. Trade unions are places where workers can gather together, and where progressive ideas can be discussed. Trade unions can also offer better Health and Safety conditions, legal protection, and support over minor quibbles with management.

Shop-Stewards and Union Reps

The ASF and AF accept that in some cases - for example in militant workplaces - it may be worthwhile for its members to become shop-stewards or union reps. (Having said this, in periods of industrial calm, there is nothing to bar our members becoming shop-stewards if they feel that by doing so they can make a contribution to the struggle against the boss class.) An AF or ASF member who becomes a shop-steward will do so as a delegate, and not as a mouthpiece for management. The role of the shop-steward/union rep will be seen not as a means to advance the interests of our organisations specifically, but as an opportunity to advance anarchist ideas generally. However, the ASF and AF realise that becoming a shop-steward/union rep is a lesser tactic in the ongoing struggle against capital, and would argue more for autonomous working class organisation (see below).

Rank-and-Filism

The AF and ASF are supportive of rank-and-file initiatives, while remaining aware of how these initiatives are often used as Leninist fronts whose sole object is to force through a particular party line. Rank-and-filism can provide us with the experience and confidence we need to become better militants and can help us in our fight against bosses. Ultimately though, it will never be able, by itself, to break the trade unions' tie to so-called Labour parties, old or new, to radicalise enough workers to affect any major change to how trade unions function now or will function in the future. We agree that trade unions cannot be reformed, or democratised from within. Rank-and-filism is a strategy that can prove useful, but only if used in conjunction with other strategies that will move workers away from the confines of 'trade union consciousness' alone.

Workplace Organising

The ASF and AF believe that workers must begin the process of thinking of themselves not as mute subscribers to decisions made behind their backs, and over which they have no control, but as individuals with the confidence and self-belief to organise beyond the manacled grip of trade unions, which, until now, have served to channel their energies down the road to nowhere.

To this end, the AF and ASF advocate the establishment of workplace and community groups that will act as hotbeds of militancy in times of increased struggle on the shop-floor (pushing ideas of resistance and direct action in the form of go-slows, sabotage, wildcat strikes…) while maintaining and strengthening links with the community outside the workplace during quieter periods. We believe these groups ultimately will federate both at local/regional and eventually at national level, and, in the workplace, across sectors of skilled and non-skilled labour. They will form a network of resistance which will involve as many people as possible: both unionised and non-unionised labour, the unemployed, single parents etc… In short, an organisation which will provide a method of autonomous working class activity where our class will decide for itself the means at its own disposal to overthrow capitalism. An example of this type of workers' self-activity can be seen in the work of 'McDonalds Workers Resistance' (MWR) who*:

"emerged as a determined response to the idiocy of our working lives… an angry rebellion against boredom, exploitation, poverty and discipline, … a rebellion against the idiocy of McDonalds and capitalism."

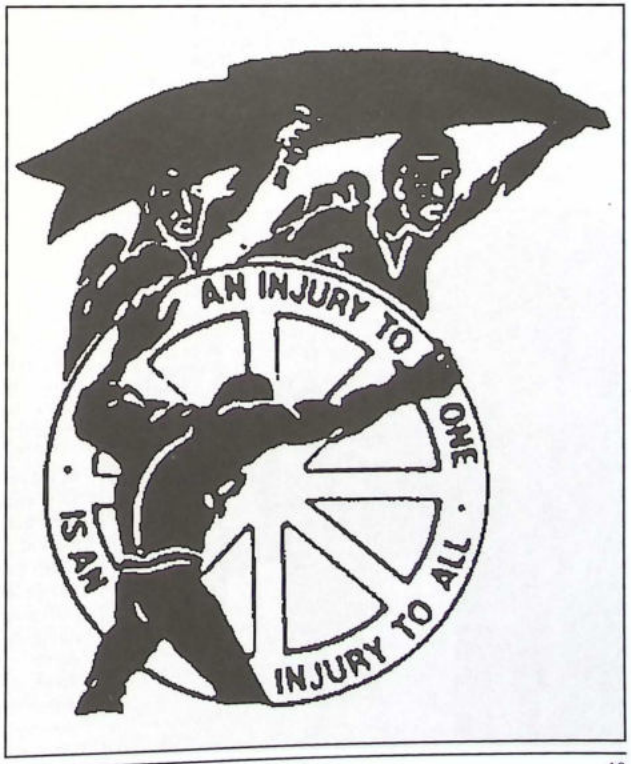
Remove the word 'McDonald' with the name of the company you work for, and you have a fair idea of what we mean.

Conclusion

The working class in Ireland today are as downtrodden as ever before. Casualisation, a run down health service, a service sector on its knees to capital, harassment of unemployed and employed alike, pervasive privatisation, mass redundancies, inflation, squalid housing, sectarianism, rampant racism… are the yoke we bear in the system we need to change. The AF and ASF don't have all the answers, but we think our ideas give us a base from which to start to do our bit to affect change, and work for the society we all of us deserve.

Contact AF (Ireland)!

The Anarchist Federation in Ireland can be contacted at:
PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ.
Or by emailing:
ireaf@yahoo.ie
Tel: 07951 079719



The Anarchist Federation now has a discussion board at the following address:
http://flag.blackened.net/wwwthreads
Log on if you fancy a chat.

Anarchy *in the UK*

Over the years the anarchist and radical political movements have had huge, mostly positive, effect upon punk scenes around the world.

Punk Rock (an aggressive raw rock musical style) has since its birth in the mid 70's, declared its rejection of and deep hatred for authority. It was also the lack of emotion and variation in the music of the time that helped shape the Punk sound. The 5 minute guitar solos, and unoriginal sound plus the complete falseness and macho posing that was 70's prog-rock led groups like The Ramones in the US to revert back to something simpler. Something that was more expressive of the feelings of youth.

It is a much-debated topic whether Punk started in the UK or the US. However, as the American Punk scene seemed to be active before the British, it makes sense to call the Americans the pioneers. Nevertheless, the harsh new style of rock spread to UK soon after and was taken up by bands like the Sex Pistols and The Clash. Punks had by no started to form their own style of dress too. The stereotypical safety pins and ripped clothes were as much down to poverty as it was a desire to look different. Many, if not all, Punks came from working class backgrounds and weren't able to afford all the fancy clothes bearing designer labels that were fashionable at the time. So when clothes wore out it was a case of fixing them or finding replacements the best you could, which inevitably meant that you could end up looking extremely 'distinctive'.

By now the Punk phenomenon had spread like wildfire. Bands were popping up everywhere, especially in London where a huge scene was in full swing. A vast movement of rebellious Punks were now the new arch-enemy of the Establishment and showed deep suspicions to anyone claiming to rule them – most notably, the Royals. The growing youth movement was, to some, a genuine revolution, that had to be stopped. The infamous 'Anarchy in the UK' tour proved just how scared the State had become. Show after show was cancelled nationally by disapproving councils, and the shows that did go ahead were met with protests from local residents and more often than not, the Church. It was no longer safe for Punks to walk the streets alone as a national hate campaign by the press, amongst others, meant that the fear of violent attacks by members of the public was very real.

Within the movement, 'rebellion' soon became exploited beyond all belief. The once alternative 'trends' were fast adopted by the fashion industry, capitalised upon and became mainstream fashion. Punk shops started emerging in most big cities selling bondage gear, hair colours, badges etc. Many of the most influential bands were also being signed up as a consumer product by the major record labels. It was around the time the Sex Pistols split that proved to be one of the final blows to Punk, with the fashion and much of the movement dying out soon after. Those that were 'Punks' had now moved onto the next fashion, Two Tone, albeit a style of music many Punks had roots in.

The Punk movement, far from being dead, had now gone 'underground'. Those who hadn't moved on to another fashion, had stayed behind to create something that was as much political as it was musical, inspired by the rebellious attitude of the earlier movement. The new Punk bands (mainly European) injected radical political, often anarchist, ideas into the music. This resulted in many youths calling themselves 'anarchists' and showing a healthy contempt towards the governing order. People were now questioning and giving alternatives to the current regimes in a way that the early punk movement didn't. Bands such as Crass and Discharge in the UK, The Ex and BGK in Holland, and MDC and Dead Kennedys in America, turned many punks into rebellious thinkers rather than just rock 'n' rollers. Conflict were one of the most notable anarchist bands of the time (still going strong to this day). Their gigs attracted some of the most fiercely political crowds from all around the country, many of which ended in riots with police with hundreds of arrests. Conflict were active in both the anarchist and animal rights movement and continually supported direct action. In an interview in May 2001, Colin Jerwood, the bands singer noted that they measured their success in not how many records were sold but in the level of direct action taking place. Conflict as a band were banned from performing in the UK, forcing them underground and overseas.

The current Punk scene is still very much alive and kicking and underground. The movement is now, theoretically, self-sufficient. Whether bands choose to use the resources within the movement is a different matter.

There now exists a high level of inter-movement communication, in the way of fanzines (primarily) originally inspired by Sniffin' Glue. The two most notable in Britain being Frakture and Reason To Believe and a flick through either ones fanzine review pages reveals a whole load more. It is fair to say that at least one fanzine exists in almost every city in the UK, many of which take the standard cut and paste, A5, photocopied small pamphlet style. Many of which are inspiring and a good read. Fanzines such as Reason To Believe (who published an interview about the Anarchist Federation between two AF members) are also very political, focusing on prisons and war to name but a few issues covered.

Beyond the photocopier, there exist a small number of independent, not for profit record distributors and record labels. And when the record is finished, there are people that will press the record for only the bare minimum costs. There are even social centres popping up, like Emmaz in London (inspired by the 1 in 12, Bradford) for Punks to put gigs on without having to play at corporate venues.

The politics behind Punk are simple – anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian and co-operative. It's an example of a cultural movement working along anarchist lines, regardless of whether the participants openly call themselves 'anarchist' or not. Punks have done a lot over the years to help a variety of courses and organisations (including the AF), by putting on benefit gigs, selling benefit CDs and promoting the aims of various groups. Far from being chaotic, punk has actually done a vast amount over its 25 years to promote the ideas and practices of anarchism to a section of society that many anarchist organisations pay little attention to.

Other Anarchist Federation Publications

Anarchism As We See It - £1
Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.50
A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1
Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

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This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

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An exciting account of the Hungarian uprising against the Stalinist monolith in 1956. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement.

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The title says it all really.

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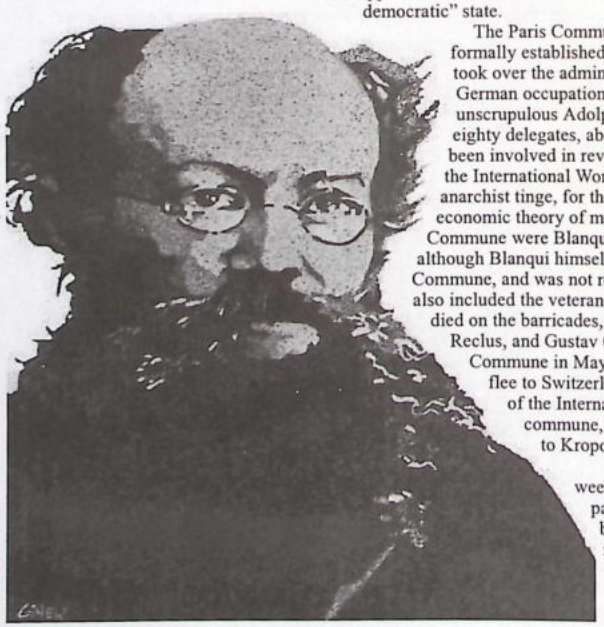
The Paris Commune and *Free Communism*

Kropotkin clearly felt, like many of his socialist contemporaries, that he was living on the "eve of great events", and that a social revolution was imminent.

The political institutions on which people had put their trust in the early part of the 19th Century were, he thought, increasingly being questioned, and that "faith in parliamentary rule, in suffrage, be it limited or universal, is disappearing". The Paris Commune of 1871 had made a tremendous impact on Kropotkin and his socialist contemporaries, and it had generated intense theoretical debate on possible new forms of political organization. For Marxists this meant the "dictatorship of the proletariat", a "worker's state"; for the anarchists the complete abolition of governments and their replacement by a federation of free communes. Although Kropotkin was in no sense a historical determinist he nevertheless interpreted the emergence of mutual aid societies and voluntary associations at the end of the 19th century, as heralding the demise of the nation state, which he felt had "served its time". Such free associations, he thought, would supplant both the state and the capitalist economy, taking over many of their functions. Education, social order. leisure activities, health, as well as economic life could all be organized and would come to be organized through communes and voluntary associations. His reflections on the Paris Commune and on societies of "free co operation" are scattered throughout his writings.

The Paris Commune of 1871 has been described as one of the most important urban insurrections of the 19th Century. It has long been hailed as both inspiration and model for revolutionary socialists. In his well known address "The Civil War in France", written only a few days after the defeat of the Commune, Karl Marx wrote that it "will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society". Twenty years later Engels was to describe the Commune as exemplifying the "dictatorship of the proletariat", and wrote that the state, whether a democratic republic or a monarchy, was "nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another". Writing almost as a quasi anarchist Engels wrote of a time when people would be "able to throw the entire lumber of the state on the scrap heap". Engels was only referring to the French Empire, for he applauds the Commune based on universal suffrage as a "new and truly democratic" state.



The Paris Commune lasted only seventy two days. It was formally established in the Hotel de Ville on March 28th 1871. It took over the administration of Paris in opposition to both the German occupation and the national government under the unscrupulous Adolphe Thiers. Its membership consisted of around eighty delegates, about half of whom were manual workers or had been involved in revolutionary politics, most of them members of the International Workingmen's Association. Their politics had an anarchist tinge, for they were largely followers of Proudhon and his economic theory of mutualism. About a dozen members of the Commune were Blanquists, advocates of a revolutionary party, although Blanqui himself had been imprisoned on the eve of the Commune, and was not released from prison until 1879. The Commune also included the veteran republican journalist Charles Delecluze who died on the barricades, as well as the anarchists Louise Michel, Eliseé Reclus, and Gustav Courbet. After the bloody suppression of the Commune in May 1871, Reclus and Courbet were both forced to flee to Switzerland, along with Benoit Malon. Also a member of the International, Malon later wrote a history of the commune, and in the following year graphically described to Kropotkin his experiences of the Commune.

The Paris Commune came to an end after a week of bloody street fighting, many women participating both in the building of the barricades and bearing arms on behalf of the revolution. As Stewart Edwards wrote "Barricades and street fighting, the traditional warfare of the urban insurgent, were simply the last resort of the Commune's struggle for

revolutionary self government". Around twenty five thousand communards were killed during May 22-28th, compared to 877 government troops, and more than ten thousand were imprisoned. Many were deported to New Caledonia, a French colony in the Pacific. There many died under a brutal prison regime. Louise Michel was not released until 1880. More people were killed in the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune than during the terror of the French Revolution.

Although the Paris Commune allowed trade unions and workers' co operations to take over factories, and made a number of important reforms, it never questioned the rights of private property. But the very existence of the Commune aroused the fury and antipathy of the bourgeoisie throughout Europe. When the army of the French republic crushed the Commune, its chief executive, Thiers, declared that: "the cause of justice, of order, of humanity, and of civilization has triumphed". But for socialists throughout Europe, both Marxists and anarchists, the Paris Commune became a source of inspiration and a symbol of hope for a better future.

It is evident that Marx saw state power as an instrument of society rather than independent of it; it was a necessary institution, and he saw the Commune as a positive form of "social republic", one involving the "self government of the producers". Marxists, therefore, have always been critical of the idea of rejecting the centralized nation state and its replacement by a federation of autonomous communities. They advocated instead a "republic of labour" -or the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Lenin interpreted this as implying the rule of a revolutionary (Bolshevik) party a form of politics that is more akin to Blanquism and it led Trotsky to be critical of the Paris Commune precisely because it lacked the central direction of a revolutionary party.

Bakunin, who took a crucial part in the revolutionary uprisings at Lyon and Marseilles in September/October 1870, was to claim, in contrast to Marx, that the Paris Commune demonstrated the bankruptcy of state socialism. It was, he wrote: "a bold, clearly formulated negation of the state", and though the majority of its members were Jacobins like Delecluze rather than socialists, the Paris Commune was seen as inaugurating a new era. It initiated, Bakunin wrote, a social rather than a political revolution. He concluded: "Contrary to the belief of the authoritarian communists that a social revolution must be decreed and organized either by a dictatorship or by a constituent assembly emerging from a political revolution, our friends, the Paris Socialists, believed the revolution could neither be made nor brought to its full development except by the spontaneous and continuous action of the masses, the groups and associations of the people."

The Paris Commune was of central interest to Kropotkin. He had met and had engaged in long discussions with many of the communards particularly with Gustave Le Francais, Louise Michel, Eliseé Reclus, Benoit Malon and Andre Bastelica. In 1879 Kropotkin established the anarchist paper *Le Révolté* and every March he wrote an anniversary article celebrating the Paris Commune. The three for 1880, 1881 and 1882 form a single chapter of *Paroles d'un Révolté* (Words of a Rebel), published in 1885.

The revolution of 1871 was, for Kropotkin, above all a popular one, made by the people themselves. When the people of Paris rose against the despised government and proclaimed the city free and independent, "It sprang ... spontaneously from within the masses", he wrote. The overthrow of central power, Kropotkin continued, took place without the "usual scenes of a revolutionary uprising; on that day there were neither volleys of shot, nor floods of blood shed behind the barricades. The rulers were eclipsed by an armed people going out into the streets; the soldiers evacuated the city, the bureaucrats hastened towards Versailles, taking with them everything they could carry. The government evaporated like a pool of stagnant water in the spring breeze".

Kropotkin suggests that in the years prior to the Commune two currents of political thought emerged within the International Workingmen's Association. One advocated a people's state, the other anarchy, the free federation of worker's co operatives. Kropotkin misleadingly thought of these concept in ethnic terms, the German Socialists supporting state socialism, while socialists of the "Latin race" (Spanish, French) advocated the complete abolition of the state. The socialist state, Kropotkin suggested, was viewed by the majority of the French Socialists as the worst of all tyrannies. But unlike Bakunin, Kropotkin did not feel that the Paris Commune, in spite of its popular character and the heroic struggles of the communards, was in fact a form of anarchy. The Commune of 1871 he wrote: "could not be any more than a first sketch. Born at the end of the war, surrounded by two armies ready to give a hand in invoking the people, it dared not declare itself openly socialist, and proceeded neither to the expropriation of capital, nor to the organization of work, nor even to a general inventory of the city's resources. Nor did it break with the tradition of the State, of representative government, and (proclaim) the independence and free federation of communes".

But Kropotkin felt that had the Paris Commune survived, then these "two revolutions" might well have occurred, driven by the force of events. Kropotkin, like other socialists at the time, sensed that a revolution was imminent. For him a social revolution implied the abolition of both government (state) and private property (capitalism), as well as of religious ideology. This meant overcoming three "prejudices", sustained and advocated respectively by priests, proprietors and rulers: god, property, government.

Kropotkin thought there were two inter-related tendencies evident in the 19th Century, one an ever growing movement towards limiting the scope of government, the other a growing tendency towards free associations or "free communism". Overly optimistic at times, Kropotkin tended to over emphasize the social significance of both these tendencies. Of course, rather than seeing the demise of the nation state and the replacement of capitalism by voluntary associations, the power of these institutions - the states, business corporations and international agencies of capital – have continued to expand. "Capital" has become global and the modern state ever more powerful. Kropotkin was a perceptive observer of social life and graphically outlined the many forms of "free agreement" that emerged in the 19th Century. These included many forms of association established without the initiative of central governments: railway networks, lifeboat associations, voluntary organizations like the Red Cross, trade unions, professional and scientific societies and hospital associations. From this Kropotkin inferred there was a general social trend in which the free association of individuals was supplanting government agencies in the performance of many social functions. He noted that many of these societies or associations made decisions at conferences through delegates, but that they did not institute "laws" but only "agreements". Kropotkin also emphasized that many public services museums, libraries, parks, street

lighting were provided in the spirit of communism, focussed on personal and social needs without reference to the value of the services the person may have rendered society.

Although Kropotkin emphasizes the power and intrusive nature of the modern state, he puts equal emphasis on the fact that much of everyday social life and many social activities are independent of the state. Like other anarchists Kropotkin always made a clear distinction between capitalism and government (the state) and society, between what Habermans describes as "systems" and the human life world. Every day Kropotkin wrote, millions of social transactions occur without the slightest interference of government. Kropotkin's idea of revolution was the replacement of state institutions based on hierarchy and coercion with voluntary relationships. Gustav Landauer (1870-1919), an anarchist who was greatly influenced by Kropotkin, put it well when he wrote: "The state is a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a mode of behaviour between men; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently towards one another ... we are the state ... until we have created institutions that form a real community and society of men". For Kropotkin this did not simply imply forming "temporary autonomous zones" for free spirits within a rampant capitalism, but creating real social institutions based on voluntary co operation that would supplant both capitalism and the state.

In his study "Mutual Aid', Kropotkin emphasized the "mutual aid tendency" that was still evident and, he thought, expanding among European peoples. In spite of the fact that throughout Europe the common lands of village communities had been plundered or expropriated by the landed aristocracy, communal institutions and habits of mutual support still existed, Kropotkin argued, throughout many parts of France, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. For example, two thirds of the forests and alpine meadows of Switzerland were still under communal control and village communities still maintained customs and institutions of mutual aid. He noted, too, that wherever the peasants had been able to resist the plunder of their lands and maintain a "spirit" of community, peasant associations had been formed, such as the Syndicates Agricoles in France, although such unions or syndicates had been forbidden by law in many European states until the end of the nineteenth century. Contrary to the opinion of economists, Kropotkin maintained that communal ownership of land was not incompatible with intensive culture and agricultural improvement, for many peasant communities initiated the rotation of crops, drainage and irrigation without land having to be privatised.

Equally important, Kropotkin emphasises that outside the rural setting, mutual aid associations continued to flourish and expand throughout the 19th Century, with the emergence of varied forms of association: trade unions, friendly societies, trading guilds (in Russia, artels), lifeboat association, various clubs that catered for leisure activities such as alpine climbing and cycling, neighbourhood associations, scientific, literary and education societies. All these exemplified enduring social institutions of mutual aid and support. They also indicated the spontaneous initiative of ordinary people and, for Kropotkin, the fact that voluntary associations and local communes or municipalities could and should supplant state institutions and the market economy.

Kropotkin envisaged a society of "free communism", a society without a state, where all essential social activities were organized through voluntary associations and a network of autonomous federated communes. Kropotkin was not politically naive and believed that no social life was possible without some forms of control and authority; it was nonsensical to think of anarchy as implying the complete absence of power. What he envisaged was the creation of a society where power was dispersed, where "repression" was kept to a minimum and where there were no institutionalised forms of hierarchy or coercive authority. From his observation and studies of tribal and kin based societies Kropotkin recognized that social customs and economic inter dependence spontaneously generated mechanisms for controlling violent and anti social behaviour. Like Tolstoy, he disavowed the use of coercion, or that it should be minimized, suggesting that "society possesses a thousand other means of preventing anti social acts-".

He suggested that there were three main ways in which human societies dealt with anti social behaviour. The first was by repression or coercion, which Kropotkin repudiated as ineffective in the long term and contrary to human well being. He wrote: "Not only has a coercive system contributed and powerfully aided to create all the present economic, political and social evils, but it has given proof of its absolute impotence to raise the moral level of societies". Secondly, there was moral teaching, but this was often ineffective, Kropotkin felt, because of the influence of immoral teachings stemming from institutional religion. Christianity, he emphasized, was always in close alliance with state power. Finally, there were non-institutional controls on anti social behaviour, customary norms and the practice of mutual aid, a concept central to Kropotkin's social philosophy.

But in contemporary Western society face to face communication, mutual aid and voluntary association tended to be restricted and marginalized by the state: "We live side by side without knowing one another. We come together at meetings on an election day: we listen to the lying or fanciful professions of faith in a candidate, and we return home. The state has the care of all questions of public interest; the state alone has the function of seeing that we do not harm the interests of our neighbour. Our neighbour may die of hunger or murder his children it is no business of ours; it is the business of the policeman. You hardly know one another, nothing unites you, everything tends to alienate you from one another...". Prophetic words!

But throughout human history human societies have developed various institutional forms and diffuse sanctions ranging from simple expressions of disapproval to excommunication and ostracism that have been utilized to counter anti social acts. Kropotkin thought these diffuse sanctions, along with public opinion and formative habits, would tend, often unconsciously, to prevent anti social behaviour. But he also recognized that in certain circumstances extreme sanctions would have to be applied to curb unwarranted behaviour in any human community.

It is important to recognize that Kropotkin did not give priority to the community over that of the individual. He said: "Anarchist communism maintains that most valuable of all conquests, individual liberty..... it does not ask the individual who has rejected god the universal tyrant, god the king, and god the parliament, to give himself a god more terrible than any of the preceding god the community - or to abdicate upon its altar this independence..... It says to him, on the contrary, "No society is free so long as the individual is not so".

Human rights inside? *Forget about it!*

Prisoners live in the strange world of rules. Rules exist and are designed to control, coerce, intimidate, humiliate and frustrate prisoners.

Paradoxically they can also be used to fight the system of control, creating small areas of greater freedom from oppression. But how can you fight back if you don't know the rules? Ray Gilbert and Glen Wright are two long-term victims of this kafkaesque situation. Their statement of protest follows:

Standing Order 3A(a) of the Home Office prison regulations gives the governor responsibility to ensure that information affecting prisoners - Standing Orders and Circular instructions - are brought to the attention of those they concern. No other guidance is provided and governors interpret the guidance their own way; procedures followed in each establishment vary, but generally the methods are as follows:

The governor of a jail, sometimes with the assistance of the Senior Managers, reviews new regulations and decides who should be informed. Department heads are delegated to inform those who need to know about any changes to policy. This system should include prisoners held in Close Supervision Centres (CSCs) under Rule 46 (segregation as a form of punishment) but doesn't. Despite it being law, why are particular prisoners consistently denied access to Standing Orders, Circular instructions and the Privileges Incentive list? It can only be seen as an abuse of the system by vindictive screws. Who in authority states Rule 46 CSC prisoners can or cannot have this information? We'd like the CSC committee to explain in writing who implements these unfair decisions as we are fed up being exploited Rule 46 inmates.

Penal reform groups have always been concerned about large sections of administrative regulations that apply to people in custody. Some of the material denied to us, for example about specific rights and privileges allowed by the prison rules, are so complex that even specialists in legal analysis cannot interpret their precise meaning. How much more difficult is it for working class prisoners subject to Rule 46 isolation? When rules govern our entire lives behind bars, it is fundamentally important that we know what they are.

In its report on 'Justice in Prison', the organisation *Justice* made important recommendations that should have been acted on but weren't. Prison rules should:

Specify the rights that the imprisoned must forfeit.
State precisely the restrictions that are, or may be imposed on the exercise of rights that the prisoner retains.
Prescribe in detail the duties of the authorities in the matter of housing the prisoner and providing them with the necessities for a tolerable life, alongside facilities for work, education and recreation.
Provide adequate means by which prisoners can seek redress if their rights are ever contravened, giving them access to an independent tribunal.
Define with the precision of a criminal statute, the offences for which a prisoner can be punished, the procedures for enquiring into his guilt if charged, and the subsequent punishment(s) that can be lawfully imposed.
Provide for his being properly informed of all rights, privileges, duties and liabilities under the prison rules.

Prison rules as we experience them fall far short of these requirements. The standards of open and impartial justice deemed necessary by the rule of law are especially important to Rule 46 CSC inmates because of their vulnerability to abuses of power, humiliation and degradation. The system manifestly fails to ensure satisfactory procedures and this failure increases the tensions of prison life for Rule 46 'Superseg' (enhanced segregation) inmates, for whom conditions are practically inhuman. It creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, arbitrariness, unfairness and resentment: a recipe for volatility, leading to inmate unrest. This has to be unacceptable, beyond reasonable expectations of endurance.

Article 3, the Human Rights Act of 1998 states: *No one shall be subject to torture or to inhuman or to degrading treatment or punishment.* In particular we draw attention to the "inhuman and degrading treatment" aspects of Article 3, which is what we feel we are being put through. The treatment of prisoners, which creates fear, anguish and inferiority, results in mental scars which many prisoners, especially poorly educated ones, never overcome.

It is for those prisoners especially that we speak out, risking further victimization. The emotions punishment provokes debase us, and often lead to physical and mental breakdown, self-mutilation, and the demolishing of resistance, which is, after all, their point. We're in prison, yes, and some of us have broken society's rules. But we too are human and have rights and entitlements as well as a duty to pay our debt. We argue, on behalf of all parties within the prison system, especially the working class, for independence and openness in the formal procedures employed for the resolution of disputes. In doing so we urge people on the outside to put pen to paper to protest the treatment of prisoners currently as ill-defined and arbitrary. Before a new society is brought into being there will be many more working class victims of state oppression. It is essential to challenge the oppressors before things get infinitely worse for those already there.

Ray Gilbert and Glen Wright,
H10111/Hu6A, CSC, HMP
WOODHILL, TATTENHOE STREET,
MILTON KEYNES, MK4 4DA

Endpiece

Ray's struggle against wrongful imprisonment continues after 22 years (eight years beyond the mandatory term for his alleged offence). Write to him at the above address. The prison governor can be reached at the same address, though in somewhat better circumstances!

Letters

Dear Organise!

Last issue's article on fatherhood was thought-provoking but had little to do with anarchism or, more particularly, anarcho-communism. The article starts by proclaiming the 'inequality' of adults compared to children and goes on to urge us to "totally give ourselves to our kids", subordinating our will and needs to theirs. No Gods, No (Little) Masters indeed! Must the biological parents of the future give up everything they want to do for two, five, seven or however many years 'parenting' is meant to last? Or should we be free to be who we want to be, no matter what?

The article seems to suggest that biological parenthood is some universally transformative event, good for adult and child, ignoring the diversity of humanity for whom either condition may be inimical. Sure we will need and win a radical change in consciousness before, during and after the revolution but it will come from the transformation of social relations not procreation.

Of course men can be carers, they can nurture. But that is a human condition not restricted to parents alone. Full socialisation as free human beings comes not from the family but from the free society, through our relations with all other humans we encounter . Patriarchy and the nuclear family, where so much abuse occurs and which are so destructive, will have to be destroyed and deserve to be destroyed by their victims, those "apathetic, crushed, damaged, sore people" the author speaks of. But what of all the other victims? Must we wait until a 'revolutionary parenthood' has created the fully-formed and imagined free people of tomorrow? Must we accept a decades-long 'holocaust of the innocents' while waiting for the waves of love and compassion emanating from the last sane people on the planet to cure all sickness and usher in the jubilee? Is the author a secret supporter of Natural Law?

In choosing anarchism I have endorsed myself. I demand no unconditional love from other anarchists - I'm not a fascist after all - but expect to share in their comradeship, solidarity and mutual aid to whatever extent they choose. This isn't lunacy. It's not competitive egotism. It's not dominance games. It's freedom.

At the end of the day this article was about spirituality and faith, a strange position for someone who obviously rejects the tired dogmas of religion. It ignores all the basic principles of freedom in favour or notions of unconditional love that are as much creations of capitalism (to bind us with bonds of blood to a social relationship that serves the ruling class far better than it does us - or where do the slaves of tomorrow come from?). We're not on Walton Mountain, after all. It ignores all science in favour of the quack nostrums of a few feminist thinkers. And it turns its back on the need to transform social relations not individual ones. Once more we're back on the individualist terrain of ripples in the pond or butterfly wings causing hurricanes around the world. Jesus couldn't do it, and nor did Gandhi. Only the millions of people of the oppressed, if necessary with guns in hand, can. What is the use of love if I can still see the bars around me? I cannot carry my child on my shoulders while fighting for freedom. I'm an anarchist and my life is struggle, not games by the fireside.

Odessa Steps

Continued from page 28

"noisy" as his health had been broken by the harsh treatment he had received in the Bolshevik labour camp. Nevertheless he and other Moscow anarchist-communists united with anarcho-syndicalists to set up the Moscow Union of Anarcho-Syndicalists-Communists in early 1919. It published a paper *Trud I Volya* (Labour and Liberty) which issued calls for direct action "to destroy every authoritarian or bureaucratic system". After its sixth number, the Bolsheviks closed it down in May 1919. "Why would we have need of money, all Petrograd is in the hands of the workers; all the apartments, all the clothes stores, all the factories and workshops, all the textile mills, the food shops, all are in the hands of the social organisations. The working class has no need of money". I.S. Bleikhman

A letter for *ORGANISE!*?

Send your letters to:
Anarchist Federation, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX
Or email
anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com

Aims and Principles

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

Want to join the AF?
Want to find out more?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.
Please put me on the AF's mailing list.
Name . . . . . .
Address . . . . . .
Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX.
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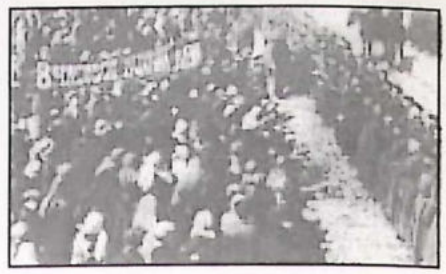
Revolutionary portraits

Iosif Solomonovich Bleikhman



Iosif Solomonovich Bleikhman was born within Russia in 1868, at Vidzy is what is now Belarus.

From a Jewish background, he took up the occupation of tinsmith. Emigrating to the United States, he became an anarchist communist in 1904. Returning to Russia, he was arrested by the Tsarist regime and deported to Siberia. The appalling conditions there meant he contracted TB. Liberated by the February 1917 Revolution, he ended up in Petrograd, becoming a leading member of the Petrograd Anarchist Communist Federation and became popular among Petrograd workers and the sailors of Kronstadt, making speeches and writing many articles under the name of N. Solntsev in the pages of *Kommuna* and *Burevestnik* (Stormy Petrel), the publications of the Anarchist Communist Federation. He was elected to the Petrograd Soviet in July, and his activities meant he was hounded by the Kerensky government.

The July Days

Discontent with the Kerensky government increased in July 1917. Workers, sailors and soldiers gathered in large meetings in Moscow. Bleikhman exhorted a delegation from the First Machine-Gun Regiment to take action. No assistance from political organisations was needed, he said, to perform their revolutionary mission, as "the February revolution also took place without the leadership of a party." He urged the masses to seize all available supplies, the factories and mines, and to destroy the government and the capitalist system at once. Later that day, the Machine-Gun Regiment revolted and were joined by crowds of soldiers, sailors and workers. The abortive insurrection that took place was known as the July Days, and the Kerensky government was in danger of being overthrown. The Bolshevik leadership considered any action to be premature and were worried that joint action by anarchists and rank-and-file Bolsheviks would endanger their party. Trotsky refers to Bleikhman in his usual condescending way in his history of the Russian Revolution: "…the anarchist Bleikhman, a small but colourful figure on the background of 1917, with a very modest equipment of ideas but a certain feeling for the masses -sincere in his limited and ever inflammable intelligence - his shirt open at the breast and curly hair flying out on all sides….The soldiers smiled delightedly at his speeches, nudging each other with their elbows and egging the orator on with pithy comments. They plainly liked his eccentric looks, his unreasoning decisiveness, and his Jewish-American accent sharp as vinegar." The Menshevik leader PrinceTsereteli sneeringly refers to him as a comical figure, small in stature, with a thin, clean-shaven face, expressing "superficial" ideas in "ungrammatical" Russian he had gleaned from anarchist pamphlets.

We continue our series, on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Icons

The Bolshevik Ilyin-Zhenevsky gloats about the fate of Bleikhman in his memoirs. He deals with the first conference of the Red Army held in Petrograd in March 1918. He disapproves of the ideas of the Red Army men. "Here at the Red Army conference…the speakers took no account whatsoever of the state aspect of the matter, but simply cursed the Soviet power from the standpoint of their own selfish interests". Bleikhman attended this conference and was elected to the presidium. The Bolsheviks attempted to have an honorary presidium put in place, consisting of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and a number of other Party leaders. Bleikhman addressed the conference saying :" I categorically object to an honorary presidium…. We've elected them already. Why do we need an "honorary" presidium for? They would be just icons that we made for ourselves. One lot of gods has been overthrown, only for a new lot to appear!" Despite this a small majority elected the honorary presidium. Ilyin-Zhenevsky was appalled by the attitude of the Bolshevik Party members at this conference, whom he considered shared the outlook of the anarchists. The conference elected a special executive bureau made up of Bolsheviks and anarchists, including Bleikhman, to supervise the work of the military commissariat of which Ilyin was a member. "Just you wait, we have yet to have a talk with you", Bleikhman "growled menacingly" to Ilyin. Ilyin goes on to say: "We 'had a talk' with him before he could do that".

Repression

Not long after the attack by armed units of the Bolshevik government on the anarchist centres in Moscow in April 1918, in which 40 anarchists were shot and hundreds arrested, repression fell on the anarchists in Petrograd. As Ilyin notes: "One fine day Bleikhman and a number of his Anarchist comrades, who were concentrated in the Moscow Gate precinct….were surrounded by our units and after some resistance compelled to surrender. …The most inveterate cut-throats among them were put in prison. After being kept under arrest for a short time, Bleikhman was released. Thenceforth he behaved somewhat less noisily". The facts go somewhat against this bland last sentence. Bleikhman was deported to a concentration camp and forced to carry out humiliating and painful labour, in mud and water up to his waist. Already frail as a result of his time in the Tsarist jails, his health was ruined and he died in 1921. He had indeed become less

Continues on page 26

T/SOR/16/31

Organise!

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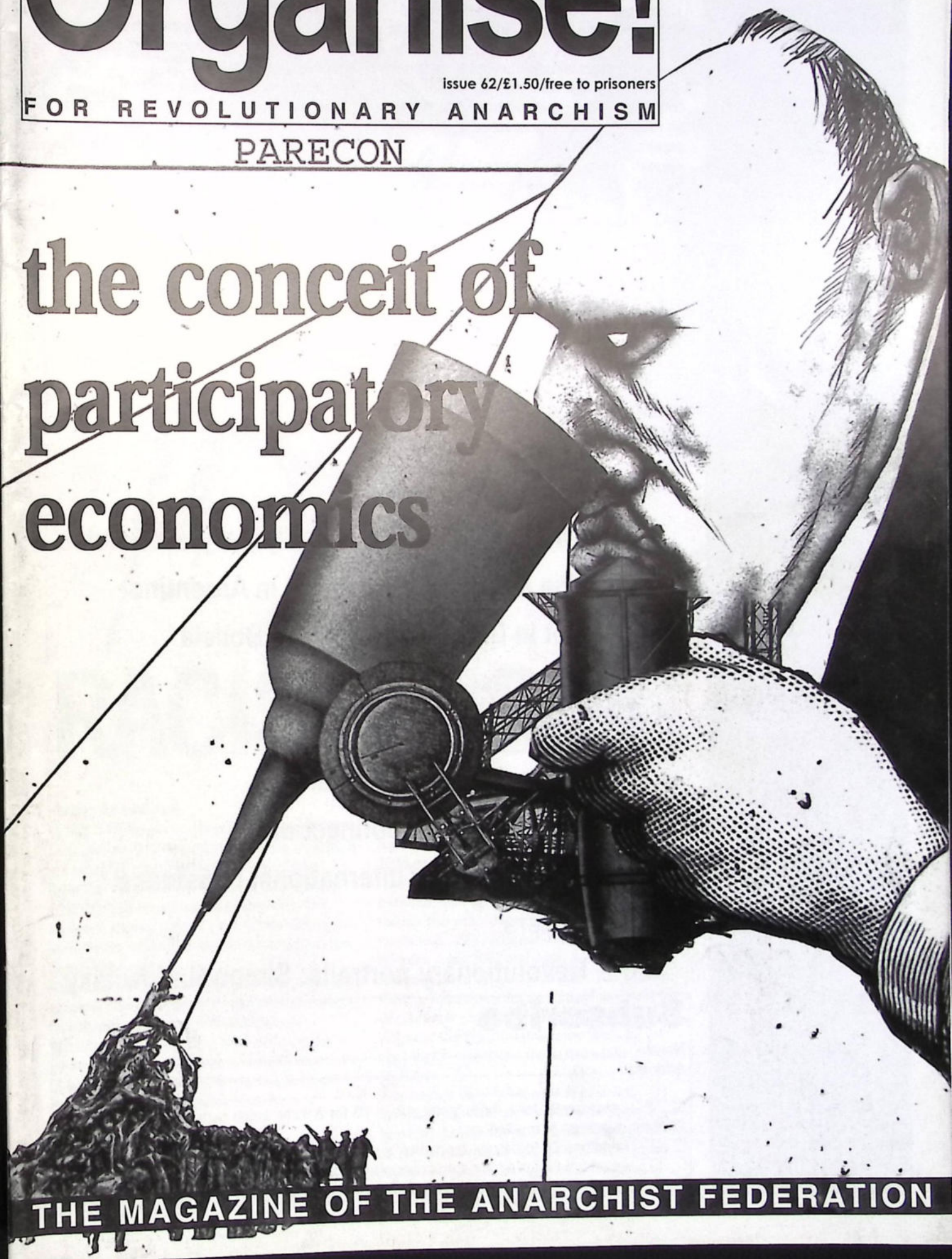
FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

PARECON

the conceit of participatory economics



THE MAGAZINE OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

T/SOR/16

Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Issue 19: The poll tax rebellion.
Issue 27: LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcomn X.
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Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.
Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon.
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin; Syndicalism.
Issue 48: French unemployed; Haillie Selassie; Revolutionary unions?
Issue 50: GM foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland - the `peace` process.
Issue 51: War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor.
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Issue 60: Iraq War; Argentina; White Boys in Ireland; Fatherhood; Yelenski's fable; Senna Hoy.
Issue 61: Anti-war action; Argentina autonomous movement; New Economy; Airline strike; Punk Rock; Paris Commune; Prison Human Rights.

Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.
We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.
As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.
The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be October 2004. All contributions should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel Hight Street, London, E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.
Acknowledgement: Most of the illustrations in this magazine are shamelessly ripped off from other magazines and websites. However, the photographs generally come from the excellent Indymedia website. They can be viewed, along with much more at www.indymedia.org. We thoroughly recommend it.

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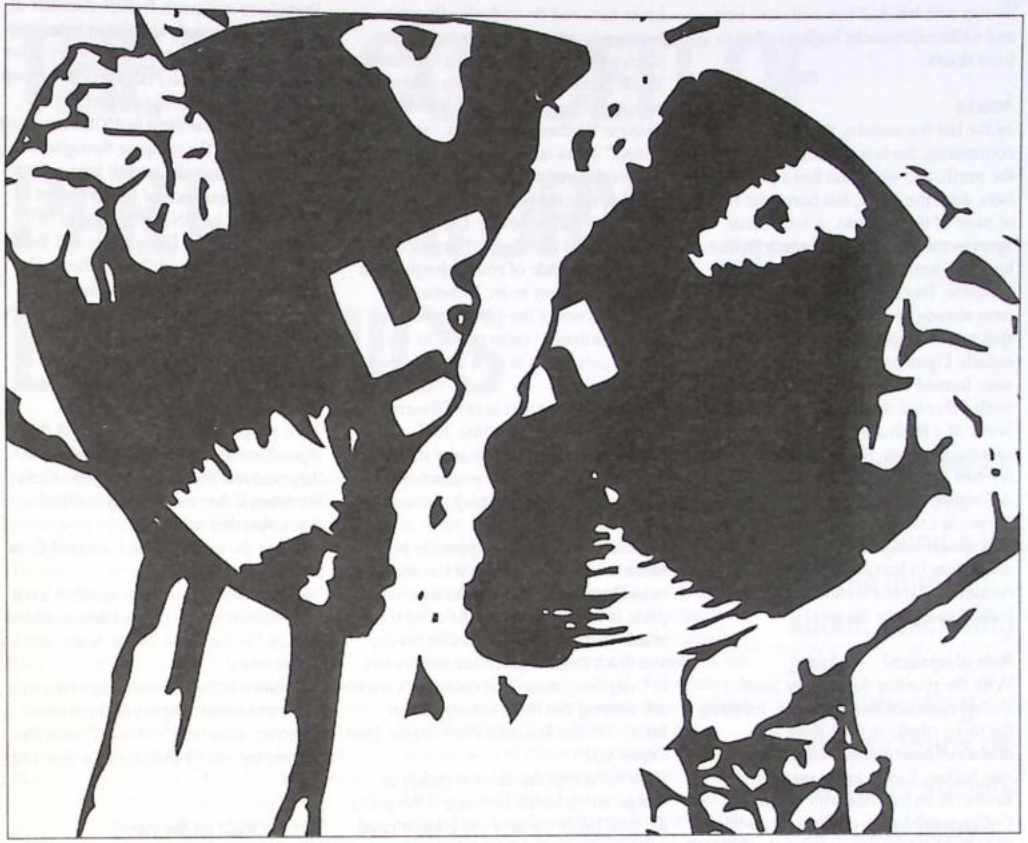


RACISM RISING

As the 'peace process' hits yet another brick wall, the rise of racism in North Ireland is viewed by some as the price we will have to pay for 'normalisation', as though the blow-torch of sectarian invective will simply switch its focus on another set of blameworthies, marked out as somehow 'different'.

Playing the race card

In fact, with the recent electoral success of Sinn Fein and the DUP, the north is facing months, if not years, of continued polarisation. Racists from the WNP (White Nationalist Party), the BNP (British Nazi Party) and others are not, however, waiting for one –ism (sectarianism) to leave by the back door before breaking into the house with another.
Racism in our society is not a new phenomenon: ethnic groups have experienced institutionalised racism and racist attacks throughout the 'troubles'. Travellers have been and continue to be among the most discriminated against groups in Irish society north and south. What cannot be doubted is that racism must be tackled.

Statistics

The dramatic rise in the number of "racial incidents" in the north over recent years is illustrated clearly by statistics. Between 1996 and 1999, more than 350 race-motivated attacks were reported, a 400% increase on the previous period. The number of attacks on children also doubled - rising from 8.5% of total attacks in 1996 to more than 16% in 1999. The annual total increased from 186 to 269 incidents between 1999 and 2000 - a rise of 45%. Over the last two years these high levels of attack have continued. 226 racial incidents were reported between April 2002 and April 2003, with 185 such attacks in the previous year. Also, due to victims' fears over coming forward and their lack of confidence in the police tackling racist violence, the official statistics are likely to significantly understate the extent of the problem.
The truth is that Northern Ireland is fast-becoming the race-hate capital of Europe, breaking the UK's record for the number of racist attacks: spitting and stoning in the street, human excrement on doorsteps, swastikas on walls, pipe bombs, arson, the ransacking of

houses with baseball bats and crow bars, and white supremacist leaflets nailed to front doors.

Attacks

In the last few months, the Chinese community, the largest ethnic minority in the north, and which has had a presence here since the 1960s, has borne the brunt of most of these attacks. A local estate agent in the Village area of south Belfast has been warned not to accommodate 'Chinese, Blacks, or Asians'. Ten tenants have already been forced out via a systematic campaign of racial abuse. Last month, Ugandan and Romanian families were burned out. A six-foot plank was hurled through the front window of the home of a Pakistani woman who was eight months pregnant. She and her brother-in-law had moved in just twelve hours earlier. A Swedish family were burned out of their homes in Lurgan, presumably because they spoke with an accent (!), and a few miles away in Portadown there is continuing friction around the proposal to build a mosque in the area.

Role of loyalism?

With the standing down of the South Belfast commander of the UVF, following the racist attacks in the Village area, denials of loyalist paramilitary involvement ring hollow. Earlier in the year David Ervine, in an interview with Matthew Collins published in the February edition of Searchlight magazine, stated that he was in no position to "legislate for arseholes" and that;

"Racism is not acceptable to me and the UVF leadership has assured me that they are not going to sanction racist attacks, nor am I going to stand by and allow it to go unchallenged."

Links have and do undoubtedly exist between loyalism and fascism, both are ideologically based on British nationalism. While perhaps the leadership of loyalism may, in the words of Patrick Yu of the Chinese Welfare Association, "seem very serious" about taking responsibility and confronting racism it remains to be seen just how effective people like Ervine will be in confronting racism. They have already stated that the BNP is welcome to stand here – while of course denying that they will get many votes. Whether the standing down of the UVF commander who "sanctioned" racist attacks in the Village puts a stop to such attacks remains to be seen.

According to a report in the Observer newspaper (December 28th 2003), a leading UDA figure in the area stated;

"...he would not tolerate or sanction any attacks on the ethnic minority community by any of his members."

South Belfast DUP spokesperson Mark Robinson has claimed that it was merely a coincidence that racist attacks were taking place in loyalist areas. Even after the attack on the home of a Muslim family, and death threats against Muslim leaders in Craigavon, some local councillors were still denying that there was any racism there. Former Unionist Party Mayor Fred Crowe said;

"I do not accept that there is racism in Craigavon. It would be better if the police did their job in the area and concentrated on paramilitaries and drug dealers."

The PUP have supported Filipino workers in Antrim, and recently issued a joint statement with NICEM condemning racist attacks. A small number of loyalists were also present at the recent anti-racist rally in Belfast. Many loyalists are undoubtedly sincere in their anti-racism and identify fascism and nazism as ideologies which many of their parents and grandparents died to rid the world of in W.W.II.

Combat 18, the WNP and two BNP's

Combat 18 (a violent paramilitary nazi organisation named after the position of Adolf Hitler's initials in the alphabet) banners have been reported at Seaview football ground. Nick Griffin, British National Party (who have tried to recast themselves as the respectable face of British fascism) leader, has been reported as visiting 'disaffected' loyalists in recent weeks. The White Nationalist Party, a split from the British Nationalist Party, have according to the Sunday Life newspaper, been recruiting throughout north Antrim, mainly in Ballymena, but with cells also in Portadown and south Belfast. Another of the groups currently circulating hate literature is the November 9 Society. Also known as the British Nazi Party, the group takes its name from the anniversary of Kristallnacht - the night in 1938 when Nazi mobs went on the rampage throughout Germany, killing almost 100 Jews and destroying thousands of Jewish-owned businesses. The BNP is thought to be preparing to target Dungannon and the area covered by South Tyrone borough council, where there is a growing population of Portuguese migrant workers. Both the WNP and British Nazi Party have denied responsibility for the recent increase in racial tension. One source for the BNP has claimed that:

"The people who go out to commit those type of acts are unhinged. And whether they read our literature, or anyone else's literature, if they are that way inclined that's what they will do."

So when the words (hinged, naturally!) on the leaflet say:

"Asylum seekers would be asked to leave immediately; if they refused they would be marched to the coast, by the Army, and told to swim"

...anyone reading the words, agreeing with them, and attempting to put them into action are somehow 'unhinged' while the authors are not.(?) (Sunday Life, July 13th 2003).

The Far Right on the move?

Tactically, the far right wants to be in place and ready to capitalise politically on any "explosion" in the number of asylum-seekers entering the North. Already the government and media across the UK and Ireland are doing much of the ground work for them – with regular scare stories about "gypsy invasions", "floods of immigrants", "maternity tourism" and "welfare scroungers".

The far right's key date will be the summer of 2005 when local government elections are scheduled, with speculation that the BNP, NF and WNP will try to repeat some of the election successes of the British National Party in England.

As libertarian communists, members of Organise! and others in the north, need to rise to the challenge. We are aware of how racism is used to scapegoat failed economic policies, and to divide our class. We need to counter this with our own vision of multi-culturalism, flourishing in a world without borders, and without the fiction of racial difference.

For more info about Organise!, check out their website at: www.organiseireland.org

THE SAD CONCEIT OF PARTICIPATORY ECONOMICS

As social and organisational anarchists, members of the Anarchist Federation believe that a free, fair and stable society of the future must be of a particular kind – anarchist communism.

People who are not anarchist communists are given the opportunity to imagine, test and promote ideas which will be ready to hand when a revolution occurs.

Now this matters because it is likely that the revolution will not be brought about by a single organisation, by a group of organisations or even millions of individuals believing one set of things about how society should be organised. It is likely that before, during and after the collapse of capitalism dozens of theories and many practical expressions of these theories will emerge. Now that could be a very good thing. But what if what is proposed and implemented is not libertarian in nature or has the capacity to recreate capitalism? Are we then to have to fight a second revolution against such ideas? Or do we challenge them now?

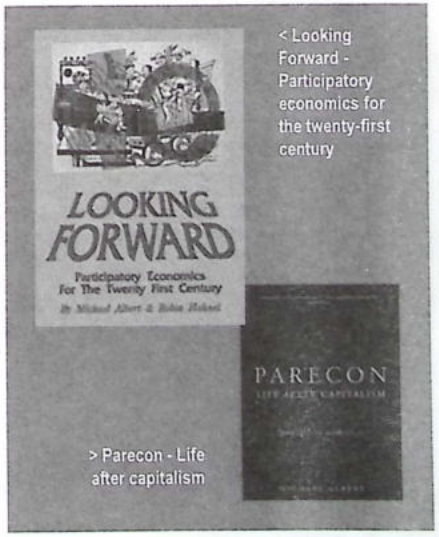
One such system is called Participatory Economics (parecon). It was proposed in two books (The Political Economy of Participatory Economics, and Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century) and has some support among anarchists and autonomists. It is a system for managing the economy of (present and) future society based on a fairer relationship between producer and consumer. While it continues to make use of a (modified) market, it seeks to abolish the power of capitalists to dictate the value of our work and the cost of consumption (i.e. wages and prices) by establishing a democratic, participatory economy based on socialised production but individualised consumption. Now who could argue with that?

Parecon: How It Is Meant To Work

Work and consumption will be self-managed. Production will take place in factories and workplaces organised in producer federations. These will decide what to produce, at what input cost (price), and in what quantity. The right to consume will be earned through work, with society granting individuals 'consumption shares' in return for labour. People who choose not to work earn no shares (not even dole) and don't eat. How many consumption shares we earn will be decided collectively with each job graded according to the social cost of production and the effort required; basically, the less socially-costly the job but the more effort required, the higher the wages, sorry, 'share'. The relations between individuals and society-at-large will be mediated through producer/worker and neighbourhood/consumer councils. Co-ordinating and mediating federations called Iterative Facilitation Boards (IFBs), would set prices based on the social cost to produce things and wages based on the 'disutility' of particular kinds of work and the effort involved in them. In order to create some basic level of fairness, each person would have 'balanced' jobs, with some shit work, some mental work, some manual work and so on, with varying rates of pay. Involvement in all the phases and stages of this economic process would be participatory and democratic in nature, creating an informed, empowered society of workers and consumers. So goes the theory.

Parecon was invented by a group of American thinkers and economists and there's a lot more to it than this short description but you've got the principles. It is an incredibly complex market system that would require many millions of people to

As class struggle anarchists we rarely spend a lot of time thinking about, describing and experimenting with the forms of the future society; we're too busy fighting the one that exists today.



< Looking Forward - Participatory economics for the twenty-first century

> Parecon - Life after capitalism

operate. For instance, there would be people actually measuring how hard a job is, assigning it a rating, balancing that rating off against millions of others, calculating relative costs and 'disutilities' and then trying to balance off the productive power and consumption of four or five billion people in millions of factories. To give you a flavour of this, consider this quote from one of Parecon's inventors to a question about calculating cost-benefit: "Say master carpentry has a disutility rating of .84 where 1.00 is the average disutility of labor in general. The indicative price of master carpentry labor would be calculated as follows: take the indicative price that emerges from the planning process – which will be the analogue of the price of arable land with 20 inches of rain and a 3 month growing season, and just like the indicative price for that land reflects productivity and scarcity as determined by supply and demand through bidding from all potential users in the economy – and multiply that price for master carpentry labour by .84. In this way disutility can be combined with scarcity and productivity to give us an overall assessment of social opportunity costs of using different kinds of labor. Consider the vast effort that would need to go into making trillions of calculations of this kind in a more or less endless round of price- and wage-setting. Then think about the vast power that could be wielded by any group of people controlling this process. Think about how you would feel if a faceless bureaucrat somewhere was deciding how much your labour was worth this week, especially if that decision affected how well you ate, or whether you could afford healthcare or schooling (yes, in parecon you have to pay for housing, food, healthcare and everything else). Parecon uses market economics. All markets are subject to a series of influences: the supply of commodities or labour, the aspirations of actors within it, their relative power and so on. Like all markets it can be manipulated and controlled and its operation may not always be fair. Markets have ability to confer political power on those who control them. And that political power can be used to defend or extend our control over the market.

The pareconomists argue that the social problems that arise from a war between the classes (in the parecon world, between producer federation, consumer federations and IFBs) just wouldn't occur. They argue that in a balanced economy like parecon, you can only get higher consumption shares or lower prices by increasing the overall size of the cake, which is good because everyone benefits don't they? This is the classic argument of capitalists if you think about it. Pareconomists say this: "In parecon, everyone gets a share of income based on the effort and sacrifice they expend in work" (Yes, Boss). Or this: "There is no way to aggrandize self or a group without benefiting everyone. For me to get ahead, the total product must grow or I have to expend more effort and sacrifice, which is fair enough." The capitalist says: "If I work hard and increase the total wealth in the world, why shouldn't I get ahead, you benefit too." Well yes, but now you're rich and powerful and we're not. In an FAQ about 'dissent', a pareconomist explained that if you had a dissenting view from the majority, you still might be able to persuade your local producer federation to give you the means to express you dissent through, say, a radical magazine, if they thought dissent was useful to society. Might they be persuaded by propaganda, bribery or threats? You betcha! So under parecon, dissent can be stifled by being denied the physical means to express itself unless you have the means of persuasion to hand. Individuals and groups with money (and that's what consumption shares are) can influence society into believing particular things and taking decisions based on that belief. For instance: "Entrepreneurs like me can run your schools more efficiently than the education federations!"

Pareconomists have no ideological defence against such a proposal. They simply say, "If it's true, society benefits so let him do it. If it's not true, society will find him out and take away his right to run the school". Yeah, sure! The ability of 'society' to reclaim badly-used resources from their 'owners' or 'users' is entirely dependent on the power of ordinary people versus the power of the owning and managerial classes. Suppose I had taken the prudent step of saying: "I can provide national security and personal protection at half-price. Let me run your army and police force" first? After all, that's what the first monarchs, priests and chieftains did. What then?

Parecon has within it the scope for large inequalities since it allows people to accumulate wealth over time and its only defence against people or groups taking control of parts of the economy and using it for their personal benefit is that the rest of us wouldn't let them. If true, we wouldn't be in the mess we are today. In parecon society, workers councils and producer federations control the means of production; after all, they are in physical possession of the mines, factories and transport systems. The federations exist, in part, to get the highest price they can for their member's labour. The iterations between consumer, producer and co-ordinator can easily become negotiations in which monopoly of the productive power can be used to bargain up consumption shares (wages) and bargain down prices. Consumers may be able to resist price-fixing for 'luxury' items but what about bread?

Many people fascinated by parecon ask would there be a government to control all this? Pareconomists reply that government exists to correct market deficiencies or supply goods (like national defence or healthcare) that markets are bad at supplying. In the perfect world of the parecon, these goods can be supplied by the producer federations. But there will still, apparently, be a need for political institutions to make decisions about: "war and peace, whether drugs are legal or not, what the rules and procedures of the criminal justice system will be, immigration policy, etc". Pareconomists tend to argue that the political and economic spheres would be largely separate. But political institutions making policy decisions do intrude into the economic arena.

Immigration policy determines the supply of labour and the cost to local economies of losing or gaining workers. Drugs policy can make certain products illegal and close down the factories producing them. A criminal justice system could declare 'economic sabotage' (strikes) illegal.

Parecon does not seem to rule out political parties. They could capture these institutions wholesale, using the economic and organisational power of supportive producer federations to blackmail the rest of society or persuade us to vote 'Socialist Worker For A Fair Society!'

Pareconomists seem to ignore entirely the lessons of the Russian Revolution about how a tightly organised, ideological faction could take over economic and political institutions in a supposedly free society. Or the lessons of the Spanish Revolution about how co-ordinating institutions like banks, commodity and production boards and so on can be captured and used against rival groups and the parts of the economy they control, for instance by bankrupting their factories (and yes, factories can be bankrupted and closed in the parecon society).

Parecon is a system in which you are compelled to work in the regulated system of the parecon. Bureaucrats establish the value of the work you do and the reward you get for that work. They also control prices and the cost to you of the things you need. The sole mechanism of control is our participation which to work is made obligatory on all people: "time necessary for consumption decision-making would be treated like time necessary for production decision-making; as part of one's obligations in a participatory economy". Our obligations! Enforced by who? In parecon, as with capitalism, wages and prices are determined by a series of power relationships, mediated by a market (the IFBs). It cannot prevent wealthy entrepreneurs from taking control of parts of the economy or powerful federations controlling prices or exploiting monopolies. The political institutions we use to balance power between producer and owner (government, parties etc) would either be non-existent or have to be re-invented to establish new controls. Its only overall regulating mechanism is the amount of what's available but as we know to our cost, it's not the size of the global economy that matters, it's how it is shared out that sucks. Though the means of production are socialised, individual property is not. Accumulated wealth confers power that enables people to grab, protect and increase their property. Parecon does not say how it will prevent private ownership developing except to say "it won't". What is to stop property accumulation beginning with entrepreneurs taking control of production? What is to stop producer units selling 'surplus' production outside the regulated economy and pocketing the profit? Pareconomists admit they could not stop black economies where people buy and sell goods and labour outside the regulated (sorry iterated) economy developing. What then? If you want to dissent, you must ask permission or starve. If you want to live and work outside the system, parecon has laws for people like you.

Now those people who want a different kind of society to us always say, "OK, if parecon won't work, what's your answer?" There's a rich and detailed literature about anarchist communist society, so if you want to know, go to it. But since we've analysed parecon in particular ways, here's a description of anarchist communism on its terms.

On Balancing Production & Consumption

The basic formulation of anarchist communism is "from each according to abilities, to each according to need". So work is self-managed (like parecon) but voluntary (not like parecon). We decide how and when we work and what we do, directly co-operating with others to create or find appropriate jobs. There will be no obligation to work but a social imperative to be productive (though it is the individual who decides what is 'productive', not society). To the argument "what about lazy people?" we answer, "he may be lazy today but will he be lazy forever?" Who can be really happy by doing nothing all day, forever? To the argument "but what about greedy people?" we answer this: since we all want to work as little as possible, why would we over-produce in order to feed or supply the greedy? And what incentive can an anarchist communist society offer me to work long hours to feed your greed: wealth, fame, status? Nothing. You'd be regarded as sick or with pity, not a customer to be satisfied. What can you accumulate in order to feed your desires? Nothing, there's no wealth to be stolen and splashed around. Society will be organised around the principles of human sufficiency, not conspicuous consumption. If you're always taking, pretty soon your co-workers and neighbours are going to stop giving. As an aside, this demonstrates that an anarchist society based on the individualist principle of personal freedom and uncontrolled consumption cannot work. Communities will be largely self-sufficient so co-ordination will be extremely simple; production and consumption will be balanced locally and directly, without huge bureaucracies with stop-clocks and calculators or the need for wasteful commerce and trade. And to avoid bureaucracies developing, work in planning and co-ordination will be rotated, and with people who want to do the work chosen by lot and open to local scrutiny. We're going to reconstruct society, including the ways we produce and consume, on simpler, more local and more human-friendly ways, deconstructing at the same time those artificial desires that capitalism has developed to fulfil. And all this will be largely self-regulating, because it will be simpler and with fewer demands made up on it to supply new and unnecessary things now!

On The Nature of Need

Parecon is based on the principle that a large proportion of people are lazy or greedy and that if uncontrolled their behaviour will wreck society. It therefore invents a vast range of controls and other systems to make people work and limit their freedom to consume. Anarchist communism is a science, just like parecon. But it is also a moral philosophy, a series of choices about how we want to live, which parecon is not. No revolution will occur unless we choose to bring it about. And a people that does not know what it is fighting for or what to do with victory is unlikely to win the war and will never win the peace. Are we really going to fight a long war

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Collective Action Notes - Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

Do or Die! - It only comes out once a year and covers a whole range of environmentally related issues, including news and discussion on the anti-capitalist movement. We don't agree with everything in it and they sometimes say unpleasant things about us, but it's a must anyway. c/o Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY. £5.00 for an issue.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists - Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them from our website (www.afed.org.uk).

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against capitalism in order to throw it all away by rampant consumption and self-gratification? And can we do it if other people refuse to feed our obsessive need to consume? Anarchist communism strips society down to the basics, to the necessary (though that's still a lot), thus removing all the things that governments and corporations and armies exist to create and control. What we call need and desire today are wholly artificial phenomena, created by capitalism as the petrol fuelling growth. Is it so impossible to imagine a society of humans with simpler needs or in which the primary impulse is to share what we have with others, alongside (not instead of or before) meeting our own needs. There may not be as many luxuries as there are today but there will be more freedom. Anarchist communism strips away everything that gets in the way of a truly free set of decisions about how each of us want to live, set in the context of an organically functional – and therefore ethical – society. Society will have no obligation to gratify our desires but will extend to us the freedom to gratify them by our own efforts and by co-operating with others who share that desire.

Work And Freedom

Work will be a voluntary act, a personal choice to work or not to work, to work now or later, to work hard or slowly or carefully, with our hands or our minds or both. Because the meaning of work lies within the personal benefit to ourselves and the social benefit to others, it must be freely chosen. Nothing in society will compel us to do work we do not want to do in ways we find wrong or alien to ourselves. Nor will there be any incentives to do this or that work. There will, for instance, be no more prestige or status attached to one job compared to another and where a person can do the work, there will be no artificial barrier (a union card, a qualification, a tribal affiliation, a greased palm) to doing it. With this freedom comes a generalised responsibility to ensure society maintains itself. If the free society is generally beneficial to all, we will want to keep it going. We will need to develop a sense of what needs to be done and whether and how we can contribute to that aim.

In part that will come, as it does now, from education and socialisation, the millions of interactions we have with our fellow human beings that shape who we are and define what we want to do with our lives. But the key part in all this will be ourselves, our social conscience, our sense of what is best for both our society and ourselves. The measure of our society and its worth to humanity will be the extent to which what needs to be done is done, by free choice and without compulsion and the pleasure humanity gets in the doing of it. We will have to use our minds a lot more, and exercise our bellies less.

The chief problem with parecon is that it is reformist and ignores the lessons of history. It believes that it is possible to manipulate government (through campaigns, lobbying and the like), to create conditions in which participatory economics might gradually emerge and flourish. Its theorists admit that government is unlikely to legislate for a form of economics that has no role for government. But they argue that space could be created for experiments in, and practical experience of, parecon. The lesson of history they ignore is that such experiments occur as mass phenomena only where the power of the state is temporarily absent or heavily curtailed, through war, economic collapse or revolution. Pareconomists are asking us to spend decades, perhaps centuries endlessly negotiating with government for permission to co-operate with each other on different terms than today. As if we had not spent centuries already requesting the state to allow us a little more freedom and only got it when we took it. We do need more understanding of how an anarchist communist society might work and what its benefits might be, both among ourselves and wider society. But if anarchist communism is possible, it ceases to be a utopia that cannot be reached. We do not need to settle for the half-way houses of socialism, collectivism or pareconomy. We can jump from capitalism to anarchist communism if enough people have made the decision to desire it and bring it about. That's not as impossible as you may think, so long as we start to decide today about the society of tomorrow.

Other Anarchist Federation Publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

Anarchism As We See It - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.50 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

Against Parliament, for Anarchism - £1 - Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.

Basic Bakunin - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

Beyond Resistance – A revolutionary manifesto - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

Work – Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us - £1 - The title says it all really.

COMING SOON: Ecology and Class - Where There's Brass, There's Muck
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THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN ARGENTINA

The following information is based on a visit by a French anarcho-syndicalist woman who recently spent more than a month and a half in Argentina (an account of which appeared in the paper of the Organisation Communiste Libertaire, Courant Alternatif).

The anarchist movement in Argentina is in a difficult situation. Its size is reduced from the old days of struggle. It is split. Its influence is weak. Its financial sources are few and clearly insufficient. It has practically no influence in society and outside the capital is practically invisible. There is a generation gap between the few, very old, militants who took part in revolutionary struggles, and the majority of the movement consisting of young people, full of determination but with little experience.
There are few militants between these age groups. The dictatorship and the resulting 30,000 dead and "disappeared" have ensured this. The vastness of the country and the very hard economic situation has made communication, visits and face-to-face meetings very difficult. Few anarchist books and texts are in print, and those that circulate are often old, often drawn from stocks dating from the 1960s and 1970s, and dealing above all with the historic past of the movement

The Federación Obrera Regional Argentina (FORA)

Today little remains of this once large anarchist workers organisation with a heroic past. A few handfuls of young people, supported by several old militants still living, have nevertheless taken up the struggle and maintain the FORA in the midst of great difficulties. At the present moment this is composed of 4 small Resistance Societies, in Buenos Aires, San Martin (near the capital) Cholila (a small village) and Esquel (a small town of 30,000) in Patagonia in the far south.
The Resistance Society of Buenos Aires consists of about 15 people, essentially young unemployed and students. Their centre, situated in the old quarter of La Boca is the only one that the FORA still has. It is pretty run down. During heavy rain, water from the courtyard pours into the meeting hall and forms a pond in its centre. The roof has leaks as well, and water runs down one of the walls in the archives room, a wall that looks like it's going to collapse soon.
With a little money that they receive from the International Workers Association (Anarcho-syndicalist international) or as a gift from the Federación Libertaria Argentina (who themselves get some money from time to time from sections of the International of Anarchist Federations) the Foristas are attempting to renovate their centre. Another problem is that the right to own the property has to be transferred to the young militants because the old comrades who have the ownership know that their time is not long. But legal doings like that cost a lot of money, and the FORA does not have that sort of money at the moment.
The centre has a little library, several old computers and some historic archives of the FORA (but these have been dispersed over the course of time, some ruined in inadequate storerooms, others vanished with police or army raids, others lost in the splits that took place in the 1910s and 1920s. The most important of them are in the hands of the official Peronist union, the CGT!).
There is a second-hand photocopier, bought with IWA money. This produces leaflets, A3 posters, and Organización Obrera (Worker Organisation) their bimonthly paper (A4 format, usually 12 pages) with a print run of several hundred. They receive newspapers from the IWA and the international anarchist movement. The propaganda they produce consists mostly of declarations of principles, historical articles or old texts reprinted in their paper or in leaflets. On the 1st May and other historic occasions they organise open-air meetings (they have a small loudspeaker) and bookstalls. On 1st May 2002, 400 people turned out for their meeting.
Some of the young unemployed FORA members are in the process of setting up a small cooperative producing bread in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Buenos Aires where an independent group runs a small libertarian social centre. This would allow them to get some money and to be involved a little in that neighbourhood.
The French comrade did not meet the San Martin group, which appears to be a handful of people, which

manages to produce a little paper, *Sociedad de Resistencia* (*Society of Resistance*).
Twenty-seven hours by bus gets you to Patagonia where 2 small Resistance Societies of the FORA exist. They gather together two handfuls of militants and a number of sympathisers. At Esquel, the Resistance Society distributes *Organización Obrera*, bundles of leaflets that they sometimes receive from the capital, and handwritten or silk-screened small posters.
They are regularly involved in support to the indigenous communities of the Mapuche of the region (small in number, the Mapuches mainly live on the Chilean coast) who are facing increasing problems of being expelled from their land. In the nineteenth century, these Indian communities were violently resettled by the army on poor soil. The survivors of these extremely murderous operations did what they could, but with no land deeds. Now, vast swathes of "fiscal" land, (belonging to the State) are being bought by big multinational companies to carry out prospecting or the raising of livestock. (This is the case with Benetton, which owns huge areas where it raises sheep for wool that is sent to its textile factories). The little Mapuche communities live on these bought lands and are often threatened by expulsion. The police are violently involved in these actions. The FORA is regularly associated with the protests of the communities (little demonstrations or symbolic occupations of public buildings). A march for the respecting of indigenous rights and against the sale and parcelling up of Patagonia took place in the capital in April 2003, following a wave of expulsions and police attacks against the Mapuches, involving the exploitation of an open-air gold mine at Esquel.
This mining project has raised tension in the region. Meridian Gold, a Canadian mining multinational, bought land on one of the mountains overlooking Esquel, after having detected gold. Its idea was to exploit an open mine and to sift and recover gold using cyanide. This is causing serious problems with a minimum of 2 large explosions each day spreading dust over the town, important risks of pollution linked to cyanide use, the poisoning of water coming from the mountain (most of which supplies poor neighbourhoods of the town), and a major social and political influence over the town by Meridian Gold.
This has resulted in large opposition drawing in shopkeepers, people involved in local tourism, the middle classes, ecologist associations, etc. Demonstrations of a size never seen before have taken place at Esquel involving thousands of people. One of these led to an all night occupation of a hall in the Palace of Justice after the violent expulsion of Mapuches in the little locality of Vuelta del Rio. Here 3 old Mapuches had their house destroyed, their kitchen garden razed and their livestock driven off by 20 mounted police who threatened them with death if they did not leave.
"Citizens" committees against the mine have emerged, putting up posters, distributing leaflets and flyers painted with slogans. Meridian Gold has undertaken an expensive promotion of its project, with publicity spots in the media, pages in the local press, lobbying of MPS and councillors, arguing that it is bringing economic development and jobs. Around 300-400 jobs for a period of 8 years are promised, and this has won the support of the Peronist Construction Workers Union of the Argentine Region (UOCRA) whose bureaucrats have made common cause with the multinational capitalists. Tension mounted, and the buildings of the company had to be protected by the police. Reinforcements of provincial and federal police as well as gendarmerie had to be sent to Esquel.
The affair has ended for the moment with a referendum in March 2003. Despite the efforts of Meridian Gold, there was an 80% NO vote (70% of the electorate turned out). Meridian tried to buy the votes of the poorest people, with free concerts, distribution of T-shirts and caps decorated with "YES to the mine", free meals with as much meat as you could eat, and 50 pesos on average for a YES vote. The poor pragmatically took all this, before voting NO!
The position of Meridian Gold and UOCRA hardened and there were many attempts at intimidation - anonymous phone calls, trashing of the homes of activists, burglaries, intimidating home visits, culminating in the beating-up of an activist when he turned up for work in the morning, accompanied by death threats and a cocked pistol pressed against his stomach. A mass meeting in front of the main company offices took place, which turned into a street battle when UOCRA thugs attacked it. An "escrache" (a surprise action of public denunciation) followed in front of the house of the mine's principal engineer who was woken and treated to all sorts of names by about 40 demonstrators. The local FORA appears to have participated in all this agitation.
At Cholila, several hours bus journey from Esquel and lost in the woods and mountains, is another Resistance Society. It participates in a "libertarian" community, composed of young people involved in artisanal work. It suffers from the difficult economic situation, as well as problems of an interpersonal nature and of internal functioning.
A regional anarchist gathering took place in January 2003 and brought together anarchists from Esquel, Bariloche, Viedma and Bolson. It led to a blockade of the national highway involving 30 masked comrades and lasted 3 hours with anti-mine slogans painted along the highway and the distribution of leaflets. No participant has been identified by the police and there was maximum publicity- it was the first road blockade in Patagonia for a long time, a region little touched by the social agitation affecting the rest of the country.

The Federación Libertaria Argentina (FLA)

The French comrade had little contact with this organisation. It claims 50-60 members in all the country and is based in the main in the capital. It has a large centre, again pretty run down. Some renovations have now taken place with money arriving from abroad. It has extensive archives and a relatively important library. Quite a few university researchers use it. On a visit there, the French comrade found several old militants, several in their fifties, and a majority of young people (between 20 and 30 years old). The FLA publishes El Libertario but apparently very sporadically, the last copy that she saw being December 2001! Some of the FLA's members are involved in the popular assemblies and distribute an irregular newssheet called De Pie (Arise!) The FLA also publishes, when it has money, a few small booklets on the history of the Argentinean movement or on presentations of anarchism. The visiting Frenchwoman did not get the feeling that the FLA was particularly dynamic.
Its relations with the FORA seem to be embittered by old quarrels, because the FORA veterans have not forgiven the FLA for having, out of their hatred of Peronism, taken the side of certain military coup d'etats!

The Jose Ingenieros Peoples Library

This was founded in 1935 by anarchists and a few socialists who did not stay with it very long. It has moved several times, was shut by Peron from 1949 to his fall in 1955, then suffered police raids and the "disappearance" of some of its participants and sympathisers during the dictatorship. Many conferences, meetings, filmshows and exhibitions have been organised by its members. It has owned the building it inhabits since the 1950s, which is quite big and quite well looked after. A dozen participants are involved, including a few support of the International Solidarity Network (SIL- supported by the Swedish syndicalist union SAC, Spanish syndicalist union CGT, and organisations like the French Alternative Libertaire).

The Organisacion Revoluzionario Anarquista (ORA)

This group, apparently set up recently, was again not met personally by the French visitor. Apparently it has 5 to 10 members and publishes a monthly paper called *Resistencia* (A4 format, 8 pages). It seems to consist mainly of students, at least one of who comes from a family of leaders of the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party, which might explain its politics. In its paper it talks of "the revolutionary vanguard" " workers' government" " programme of the workers and masses" " militant work in cells" and calls for " a workers and peasants government and the creation of people's self-defence militias in Iraq to struggle against the Yankee-imperialist war". A distinctly dodgy outfit, which leads us on to the.....

AUCA and MUP

Sixty kilometres to the south of Buenos Aires is the university town of La Plata (600,000 inhabitants). There the French comrade met the group of the AUCA-Socialismo Libertario. This group consists of 15 militants publishing a well-designed paper, *Ofensiva Libertaria*, with a print run of 500 (A4 format of 8 pages). This little group, composed mainly of students and unemployed ex-students was the inspiration for the creation of a important 'piquetero' movemer the La Plata region and the dist of Quilmes, the Movimiento de Unidad Popular (MUP).
Pre-occupied for a long time with the lack of social influence and implantation of anarchism, the AUCA have worked for several years in some poor neighbourhoods. With the deepening of the crisis, the social explosion of December 2001 and the winning by the piquetero movements of contro of individual plans of social aid, MUP has, like most piquetero movements, grown considerably.

Today more than one thousand people are members, grouped together in a "front" of neighbourhoods and a student "front" controlling several hundred plans.
In the neighbourhoods and shantytowns the work of the MUP consists of developing comedores (people's kitchens for children) setting up classes and schools, vegetable gardens and bread ovens. The MUP is equally involved in campaigns around public health (sanitary and medical conditions are often very bad in the poorer areas) and participates with other piquetero movements in a " Coordination of Public Health" which has led to blockades of pharmaceutical laboratories and campaigns of collections at chemists and pharmacies, which has allowed them to gather together 33,000 various medical treatments which have been shared out among the dispensaries run by the different movements of the coordination.
At the university level, AUCA has been behind the creation of Aguas Negras (Black Waters) a student association that is allied with the Maoists and the group Quebracho (inspired by the left Peronists of previous decades, the Montoneros). They have taken control of the leadership of the student federation of La Plata, which was controlled before 2001 by liberal Peronists. They presented a list with their allies at student elections and had several elected in certain university departments and are participating in "power-sharing" bodies of the university.
With the MUP, the AUCA has occupied a private school which went bankrupt in the centre of La Plata. This is a huge building where they can meet, house people, set up a library and school courses, and have public meetings etc.
AUCA has an important sphere of influence via the MUP but at the same time is overwhelmed by the amount of work and confronted with the same problems as other piquetero movements. Their use and direct control of the individual plans of social aid has attracted to the MUP many people who are non-politicised but need the help of the plans They have to gain political and practical experience and the MUP has to function in a fully participative way (not easy, especially at the beginning, with the number of inexperienced and passive new members). In the present period with the falling back of the social struggles, the State will probably try to find ways of regaining control of the plans of social aid, which will empty the piquetero movements of the greater part of their members. To avoid that, schemes for people's bakeries, vegetable plots, the raising of rabbits and chickens and metal workshops have to be set up to keep these people involved before the State turns the tap off on the social aid plans.
The AUCA is inspired by the practices of the Federación Anarquista Uruguayano – the Anarchist Federation of Uruguay (FAU) a specifically Platformist organisation which has set up "broad" fronts of action among workers, students and in the neighbourhoods. This unfortunately has the effect of producing a Leninist schema with a political vanguard linked to a mass organisation with a "broad" recruitment, little politicised and at least partly manipulated by the objectives of the vanguard.
The AUCA's drive to develop influence and implantation and to develop numerically and logistically, has led it to involvement in the game of electoral representation at the university, to trying to build a base of support in part relying on a presence in the institutions, and alliances "against nature" with political grouplets.
The AUCA also refers to the development of "people's power" of "a government from below" based on organisations of the "popular forces" and on strategic alliances between revolutionary organisations. This power would have a "national, anti-imperialist, popular and democratic" content and would develop, at least at the start, " in the general framework of the bourgeois State". Even if their ideological references are anarchist (of a clearly Platformist and class struggle tendency) the organisational culture and strategy of the AUCA is undoubtedly strongly tainted by Marxism and indeed Leninism. This explains why, despite its real mass influence and its willingness to "bring anarchism down into the street", most of the other libertarian groups in the country regard AUCA with mistrust or hostility, as being a group on the margins or indeed outside the anarchist movement.

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.
Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.
A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

All Stormy Petrel pamphlets are available from AF (London), c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX.

HOT IN CHILE, ON THE BOIL IN BOLIVIA

On August 13, 2003 Chile had its first general strike since the Pinochet dictatorship. It was supported by 80% of workers in both the public and private sector.

The anarchists of the CUAC- Congress of Anarcho-Communist Unification- have been among those agitating for this general strike over the course of the last year. There is a massive level of unemployment in Chile, many jobs are short term and there has been a general impoverishment among the working class. Privatisations and a massive debt have contributed to these miseries. Alongside this is a massive anger among the people against the widespread corruption within the governing class. The government of Ricardo Lagos and his Socialist Party are implementing laws and a neo-liberal economic plan developed under the Pinochet regime. As well as workers, students, various women's organisations, artisans and the unemployed have been involved in the unrest. Whilst it was officially led by the main trade union organisation, the CUT, it still represented a general wish to get rid of the old Pinochet codes of work and the old Pinochet political constitution.

The strike was most massively supported among the copper miners, health workers and teachers in the public sector. In the private sector the taxi drivers were the most militant. Also noticeable was the participation of the lorry drivers, who were used by the military in the run up to the coup of 1973. But the situation has changed considerably and 90,000 of them are unemployed.

Nearly a million people demonstrated in the main towns. The police viciously attacked these, and in Santiago, there were 200 arrests.

Workers, unemployed and students responded bravely and the riot police were forced to retreat under a rain of stones. The copper miners physically confronted the police in northern Chile. The socialist government is using the sinister political police against the unrest. At the same time, the Socialist Party said it was supporting the strike! Outside the workplaces there is a growing movement in the neighbourhoods and shanty towns, which is now beginning to coordinate throughout Chile. The mass movement in Chile is at its first stage compared to the movements in Argentina and Bolivia.

On the boil in Bolivia

The history of Bolivia is marked by a long tradition of struggles. In 1952 a popular insurrection ended the military dictatorship and workers took control of the mines. To head off genuine socialisation, the government of Paz Estenssoro nationalised the tin mines.

In 1978 Bolivian women opposed to the dictatorship started a hunger strike which ignited a general strike leading to the fall of the dictator Hugo Banzer.

In 2000 the population of Cochabamba, the second town of the country, rose against the privatisation of water and the British multinational that owned the water distribution network had to withdraw from its concession. This lead to the municipalisation of water.

The popular uprising of September-October 2003 which led to the fall of president Sanchez de Lozada mobilised 70 % of the population but did not raise the question of changing society radically.

There was massive unrest in Bolivia in opposition to the export of gas to the USA in those months. The Western media put the accent on this as the cause of the unrest, but really it was a catalyst for general discontent over widespread privatisation, the cutting of pensions, education "reforms", and calls for the redistribution of the land and the determination of the government, under pressure from the US, to destroy the cultivation of coca leaf.

Already during a revolt of 12-13 February 2003, the government had fired on the crowd, killing 35 and wounding 210.

The September uprising was ignited in the Altiplano region. There the peasants blockaded all the main routes to the capital, La Paz. As a result there were hard struggles with the forces of order, leading to 6 dead including a child of 7. In the town of El Alto, with a population of 650,000, a "civic strike" organised by the neighbourhood associations paralysed the town and spread through the La Paz valley. The army surrounded the town with tanks. As a result of struggles with the military, at least 30 people were killed. In response, electric power stations and gas pipelines were attacked. Another child, aged 5, died in the confrontations. Rumours circulated of mutinies in the barracks and police stations.

Three thousand miners marched from Huanuni to La Paz to join the protests. The army blocked their route on 15th October a hundred miles from El Alto. Another vicious attack took place, leading to 2 dead and more than 15 wounded by rifle fire. The soldiers used the situation to rob the miners of their personal possessions. On the 15th also, the military closed down several daily papers that criticised the Sanchez de Lozada government. The television studios were also attacked by the military, but huge assemblies outside them caused the army to retreat. This was not the case with various radio stations, where the army dynamited the studios.

Goni has gone

Various ministers began to resign, but "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada then appeared in public surrounded by fascist and far right leaders and proposed a referendum to "consult" on the question of gas sales. This was meant to calm things down, but only led to larger demonstrations, where the subject of 75 murdered by the regime in the confrontations, and avoided by "Goni", was put on the agenda. Goni referred to anyone opposing the government as "terrorists, drug traffickers, enemies of democracy, anarchists and delinquents".

The military panicked more and began to destroy TV aerials in the working class areas. On the 16th October enormous demonstrations converged together on the administrative capital. More confrontations with the military took place leading to more deaths. The vice-president broke ranks and said he was opposed to the government's policies. Seven hundred people set up "hunger strike pickets" in various regions, demanding the resignation of Goni. He was forced to resign, to be replaced by his vice-president, Carlos Mesa.

Both the workers movement and the movements of the Indian tribes were decisive, but equally important was the mobilisation of young people, the citizens assemblies, and above all women.

Women were the driving force in setting off hunger strikes in 20 provinces of La Paz region. They were in the forefront of the road blockades. They inspired and gave courage in all the confrontations with the police and army. The mobilisation of women was massive but was passed over in silence by the political organisations, unions and struggle committees involved in the uprising. Men monopolised the platforms during the marches on La Paz. Women were relegated to domestic tasks like the preparation of meals.

At the presidential elections in June 2002, 48% of the population abstained and Goni owed his winning of the presidential post to an alliance of circumstance of all the political parties opposed to the Radical Left of the Indian leader Evo Morales, who came second.

Carlos Mesa has the support of the USA. The ruling class remains in place. The opposition does not want to go beyond the overthrow of Sanchez Lozada. Morales and Quispe, the Aymara Indian leaders, want to take power so they can convene a sovereign constituent assembly and push through a programme of nationalisation. But beyond these reformist measures are moves to federate the popular organisations that sprang out of the insurrection, to link together workers, peasants and Indian committees.

The anarchists in Bolivia do not have the capacity to exert much influence at the present time. Some are active in the revolutionary syndicalist minority of the COB (Bolivian Workers Central) others have been very active in the youth movements. They constitute the revolutionary elements that tomorrow, we hope, will give birth to a current capable of inspiring a new revolutionary movement in Bolivia.

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IN THE TRADITION PART 4

The penultimate article in our In The Tradition series.

This, the fourth part of our look at the political theories and movements which have influenced our development, takes in the last 35 years. It has been a period of great worldwide change and a period where new ideas have emerged and old ones, seemingly eclipsed, have been rediscovered.

The New Left

The 'New Left' which emerged in the 1960s attempted to distinguish itself from the old left of the established Communist parties, social democracy, Labourism and Stalinised socialism in general. It embraced the so-called 'Second wave' of feminism, sexual liberation and homosexual equality. Alongside anti-racism, all these ideas seem mainstream today but to the old left even 40 years ago they were new and startling ideas. Certainly the notion of women's' liberation and of racial equality had been present since the birth of socialism, but rarely were they seen as central to the revolutionary project. Superficially, much of the New Left appeared genuinely libertarian, genuinely interested in a truly social revolution. In reality, much of the New Left was tied closely to either Leninism (quite often Maoist or Trotskyist) or to more *openly* reformist currents of thought. The New Left may have rejected the worst excesses of Stalinism but generally fell short of making any critique of top-down versions of socialism and in many ways copied the failed politics of the past, not least in their willingness to support anything that moved including every 'national liberation' racket that emerged.

It is of little surprise then that many of the leading lights of the New Left were to re-appear in the last 35 years as thoroughly establishment figures, academics and media-gurus.

So, a balance sheet of the effect of the New Left shows that although it managed to bring up crucial questions, about what liberation must involve, which had remained marginal for many years, it was unable to give any answers.

So what of the libertarians?

The events in France in 1968 (see In the Tradition pt.3) had given anarchist and other revolutionary movements both a big surprise and a great deal of attention. In the period of the early 1970s anarchist, libertarian Marxist, council and left communist group emerged across Europe in a wave of interest amongst young workers and students for methods of understanding and changing the world around them. The anarchist movement at this time had been at a particularly low ebb, having never recovered from the eclipse of the movement during the 1930s-1940s. Certainly small currents still existed (see In the Tradition pt. 3) and some of these had attempted to renovate and bring forward new ideas. However, much of what passed for a movement was firmly embedded in a happier past and found it difficult to relate to the 'youth revolt' of the late 60s. In the French events of '68 the 'official' anarchists had played an essentially marginal role.

So, much re-inventing of the wheel took place in the early 1970s.

British Platformism

1970 saw Britain's first Platformist group, with the forming of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA).

Although this organisation signified a break with the chaotic synthesist approach to anarchism hitherto employed in post-war Britain, much of its politics seemed to echo the Trotskyist left. Eventually a large part of the organisation ended up joining the Trotskyist camp itself. Subsequent Platformist-orientated anarcho-communist groups, such as the Anarchist Workers Association (AWA) and the short-lived Libertarian Communist Group also displayed Leninist and reformist tendencies that would eventually see their abandoning libertarian politics. But the legacy of these groups was important for two reasons. One, they had, prior to their degeneration, established a bridgehead against the dominant tendencies within British anarchism, notably individualism and anti-organisationalism. And secondly they showed later militants how not to create consistently revolutionary organisations (a lesson unfortunately lost upon the Anarchist Workers Group of the 1980s/90s.).

Around the same period of the mid to late 1970s other tendencies also began to emerge, notably from an unlikely source – the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB). This party, celebrating its centenary in 2004, defends a particular, and indeed consistent, version of Marxism that refuses any compromise with 'reformism' or struggles around bread and butter issues, instead organising to 'make socialists' through propaganda and to contest elections. Some younger members within the SPGB had began to question the timeless orthodoxies of the party. These critical elements began to come together in a discussion circle which quickly realised that the way forward did not lie within the monolithic atmosphere of the party.

In the mid seventies this faction found itself outside the party. Calling itself 'Libertarian Communism' it attempted to re-assess much of the politics outlined in In The Tradition parts 1-3 whilst remaining in the framework of a Marxist analysis. After changing it's name to Social Revolution this group joined the libertarian socialist group Solidarity (see In the tradition pt.2), before embracing an unorthodox councilism in the early 1980s as the group Wildcat. Wildcat, based mainly in the North West of England, was amongst a very few currents that actually attempted to creatively advance communist political theory in the 1980s.

Democracy

People involved with Wildcat and Workers Playtime, a left communist journal in London, amongst others, were involved in discussions on the nature of democracy and the fetishization of decision-making processes. Of course, communists have always rejected representative democracy in its classical liberal democratic-parliamentarian form, but now the content, not just the form of democracy was being questioned. Sometimes this took a consciously vanguardist tone, but besides the rhetoric there were serious questions raised about the need for working class militants to push ahead with action, regardless of the outcome of ballots, shows of hands etc. These questions were, partially at least, emerging because of the practical struggles that were taking place in the British coalfields during the 1984-85 miners strike. The capitalist media and sections of the left and far left were insisting that the National Union of Mineworkers should have held a ballot in order to have brought into the strike thousands of scabbing Nottinghamshire miners.

Communists began to talk of a need for the revolutionary minorities of the working class to, when necessary, to ignore 'majority' decisions and to find ways of organising in an egalitarian way without fetishising the atomising nature of democratic decision-making. These ideas were really a reflection of how workers in struggle (particularly the Hit Squads of the Miners Strike) have to operate in order to be effective.

Continued next issue.

A SIBERIAN MAKHNOVSCHINA?

Academics like Paul Avrich, along with militants like Voline, Gorelik and Archinov, have given us only a sketch of anarchism in Siberia. The important role of anarchism there has remained obscured.

Now the work of Anatoli Shtirbul has cast a spotlight on this region and its anarchist history. His work `The anarchist movement in Siberia in the first quarter of the 20th century: Anti-statist revolt and non-statist self-organisation of the workers` has been published by Omsk University in 1996 but as yet has not appeared in any translations in Western European countries. His two-volume work contains many documents from the archives of both the Cheka (the Bolshevik secret police and chief arm of repression) and the Communist Party, as well as eyewitness accounts from different sources. Shtirbul is certainly no anarchist, let alone sympathetic towards anarchism, but he has painstakingly demonstrated its influence on both revolutionaries and general population of Siberia.

Shtirbul links up the anarchist tradition with the secular traditions in Siberia. He instances the tendency towards anti-feudal autonomy of the Cossack groups, the strong links of solidarity between the peasants and bandit groups, the anti-statism of dissident Russian Orthodox groups and the influence of Protestantism in the region in the 19th century, and the existence of cooperative practices among both peasants and workers. Bakunin has often been ridiculed, including by Marxists, for his support for bandit groups within the Russian Empire. This work gives some credence towards his recognition of the social importance of banditism and its radical possibilities. In fact Shtirbul, basing himself on the work of Lojdikov, believes that Bakunin deepened his libertarian convictions whilst exiled in Siberia. This was certainly the case with Kropotkin, who admitted as such in his memoirs.

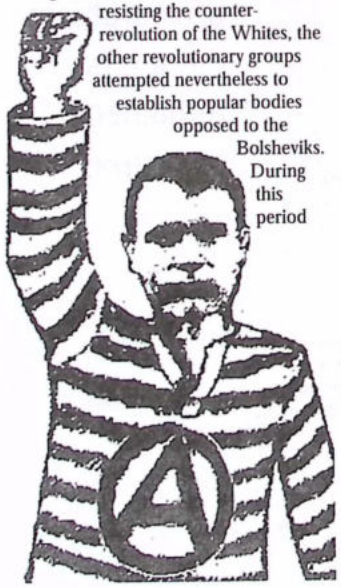
Exile

The presence of anarchists in the prisons as well as in exile in Siberia as the result of their activities against the Tsarist regime must count as one of the foundations of Siberian anarchism. The first specific anarchist groups appeared in 1902, and their social appearance date from the first Russian Revolution of 1905-1906. Very much in a minority, anarchists concentrated on oral or written propaganda. The failures of the reformist parties and the repression that followed the revolution, coincided with a worsening economic situation and fall in the

standard of living. This pushed a section of politically active workers towards anarchist positions. The Tomsk anarchist group, meeting in 1907, decided to spread propaganda through spoken and printed word, agitation in the armed forces to prepare an insurrection, legal activity via cooperatives, unions and solidarity funds, expropriation of the State banks and private rich individuals, terrorism against certain individuals. In collaboration with the Social-Democrats, the Social-Revolutionaries, and non-party revolutionaries various armed actions took place: an aborted uprising in 1907 at Omsk, and one in 1911 at Tchita, with the desertion of 30 % of a regiment. Acts of expropriation and terrorism were equally numerous.

In 1914 a conference of anarchist communists took place in a village in Irkutsk province. 30 people participated and established a double line, anarchist propaganda and terrorism against the representatives of power. At the same time there developed the splitting of the anarchist movement into three currents, anarchist communism, anarchosyndicalism and anarchist individualism. Shtirbul estimates 100 anarchists compared to 3,000 Social-Democrats and 1,000 Socialist-Revolutionaries for the period 1906-1907. In 1917 Shtirbul estimates 46 anarchist groups and clubs with 800 militants.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 turned rapidly in favour of the Bolsheviks, who quickly got control of all the apparatus of government. Occupied with resisting the counter-revolution of the Whites, the other revolutionary groups attempted nevertheless to establish popular bodies opposed to the Bolsheviks. During this period



the anarchists split into pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet tendencies. In Siberia, the anarchists started a constructive activity, notably organising among the miners of Keremovo. This was despite internal problems linked to the presence of "criminal elements" in its ranks.

In September and October, workers seized the factories and workshops. Shtirbul refers to a "spontaneous anarchism" without apparent link to the anarchist organisations. This explains Lenin's anxiety that the situation was getting out of control of the Bolsheviks. At Irkutsk, where the reactionary general Kornilov was in control, there was a failed uprising of the garrison in September 1917, but equally there was anarchist agitation among the garrisons at Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tcheremkhovo, Semipalatinsk, Tchita and among the fleet on Lake Baikal. Whilst the activity of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks rapidly decreased, that of the Bolsheviks and the anarchists grew. The anarchists were strongly implanted in the regions of Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk and around Lake Baikal. These 4 regions covered nearly three and a half million square kilometres, 12.7 per cent of Siberia.

Soviets

Anarchist books- Kropotkin, Reclus, and Malatesta- began to be published by Novomirski Editions as well as the appearance of newspapers like Sibirskiy Anarkhist (The Siberian Anarchist) in Krasnoyarsk and Buntovnik (The Insurgent) in Tomsk. Conlicts began to develop between anarchists and Bolsheviks.

During the winter of 1917-18 the Krasnoyarsk anarcho-syndicalists declared themselves opposed to the " the taking of power in the Soviets" and affirmed that they were prepared to struggle against the parties that left no place for "proletarian revolutionaries". In spring 1918, the Tomsk anarchists defended an organisation of soviets that truly expressed the interest of the workers. In the course of 1918 there could be traced an anarchist presence at different congresses of soviets.: 7 delegates out of 104 for West Siberia, at Irkutsk in January. Beyond these figures, certain details indicate an anarchist influence in these structures. At the all-Siberia congress of soviets, which took place in February at Irkutsk, there were 8 anarchist delegates out of 202. The congress elected to its direction 25 Bolsheviks, 11 Socialist-Revolutionaries, 4 Maximalists, 4 anarchists and 2 Internationalist Social-Democrats.(just over 45% of the direction were therefore non-Bolshevik).

Shtirbul recognises the growing influence of the anarchists among railway workers and peasants, reinforced by the soldiers of anarchist persuasion sent to Siberia. Interestingly, he comes to the same conclusions as Makhno and Arshinov- it was the lack of coordination and an absence of tactical unity that hindered the development of anarchism comparable to that of the Bolsheviks on the level of Siberia and Russia.

The Bolsheviks moved against the anarchists in spring 1918, using the Cheka to attack them and imprison them. But the disarming of anarchist units in Siberia by the Bolsheviks was hindered by the attack by the Whites led by Kolchak in March 1918. These units, as well as units organised by the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, fought too efficiently for the Bolsheviks to allow themselves to destroy them. They were in the first rank of the underground resistance when the Whites occupied Siberia. In autumn 1918 anarchist peasant guerrilla groups appeared in the regions already mentioned. Novoselov was commander of a group of tens of combatants singing The March of the Anarchists and flying red and black flags inscribed with the slogan "Anarchy is the Mother of Order" (a sentence from Reclus also used on Makhnovist flags). Other anarchist detachments elected their commanders. Shtirbul considers that a significant number of the 140,000 revolutionary combatants in Siberia were under anarchist influence. Like the Makhnovist detachments who contributed in a decisive fashion to the defeat of the White general Denikin in the Ukraine, the Siberian anarchist partisans (Novoselov and Rogov) contributed to the pushing back of Kolchak, From a strictly military point of view, the support of the anarchists in the struggle against the Whites was indispensable. This explains why, despite orders from Moscow, there were severe problems with the crushing of Siberian anarchism, as local Bolsheviks regarded the anarchists as honest revolutionaries.

Suspicions

The Communist Party had problems in Siberia with the designation by Moscow of leaders from outside the region and the nomination of ex-Tsarist officers as Red Army leaders. These circumstances gave validity to anarchist suspicions about the Bolsheviks and their proposals that the revolution be controlled by the masses themselves. Within the Fourth Army of Peasant Partisans led by Marmontov, the commander M.V. Kozyr proposed that the soviets be organised without the Bolsheviks. The Communist Party leadership had him removed and had a Bolshevik put in his place. Immediately a mass assembly of the garrison voted through the following resolution:" The revolutionary committeees of the military elected by us have no power... no-one can dismiss our representatives and replace them with people that we do not know...". Kozyr himself said that "Let us name the best among us choose those who merit our confidence and who understand our needs." A report of January 1920 for the Altai region by the government noted that the peasants had expected the development of regional control. When this clashed with the centralising tendencies of the Bolsheviks, growing antipathy resulted.

Resistance to the incorporation of partisan units was organised around the units commanded by the anarchists Novoselov, Rogov, Lubkov and Plotnikov, in the Altai, Tomsk and Semipalatinsk regions. The anarchists led a campaign for the creation of self-organised peasant collectives and the freeing of Rogov, which they achieved in April 1920. On 1st May that year, there was a massive anarchist meeting in the village of Julanikh, 120 km northeast of Barnoul, where speakers paid their respects to the victims of White terror. A thousand partisans took part and several thousand peasants attended, flying red and black flags. Two days later an insurrection broke out. A thousand people gathered. Novoselov, who had commanded a unit of one hundred anarchist fighters which had ranged nearly one thousand kilometres in the Altai and Kuzbas regions, from December 1918 to December 1919, proposed the creation of an Anarchist Federation of the Altai (AFA) which was supported by Rogov and seven other commanders. The military detachment grew to one thousand and received the support of thousands of peasants from the Pritchensk region. This insurrection grew thanks to the activities of the AFA in the Red Army, the militia and the Cheka (the last extremely significant as it was the armed wing of repression of the Bolsheviks and indicates the level of disaffection). Anarchist partisans occupied the northeast region of Barnaul and the Biiski, Kuznetskov and Novonikolaev regions.

Despite orders from the Moscow centre, the local Bolshevik authorities held their fire, probably because they feared that disaffection would spread to other army units. Once the Red Army began to attack, the Rogov units split into small units which dispersed throughout the taiga.

In June 1920 Rogov was captured and committed suicide (?) Novoselov continued the struggle up to September 1920, before going into hiding with his partisans. At the same time Lubkov sparked a new insurrection in the Tomsk region, grouping 2,500 to 3,000 fighters. Defeated, Lubkov attempted to negotiate a truce with the Bolsheviks before vanishing into the taiga with some of his partisans. In January 1921 Novoselov participated in a new insurrection at Julianikh. His peasant army gathered together 5-10,000 combattants. In an extremely desperate situation, he attempted to form an alliance with anticommunist forces, including the Whites. He hoped to turn against them once victory over the Bolsheviks was gained (the Makhnovists in the Ukraine refused such an alliance on political principle and actually went into military alliance with the Reds, though the latter turned on them).Both the stances of the Novoselov and Makhno movements point to a lesson of the need for complete autonomy from any antianarchist current). Novoselov was quickly crushed.

Shtirbul believes that the "Siberian Makhnovschina" was a contributory factor in the adoption by the Bolsheviks of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

The Bolsheviks continued their war against those who had heroically fought in the underground resistance against Kolchak's Whites. In 1923, in another onslaught against revolutionary forces outside the Bolshevik Party, the staff of the irregular units at Nikolayevsk on the Amur were shot - these included the Maximalist Nina Lebedieva and the anarchist Triapitzin (the Maximalists were a split from the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who came to adopt positions very close to anarchism). These irregulars had defeated the Japanese invading forces. Also shot were members of the local soviet, the Communist Party member Sasov and others who had questioned the setting up of the Far Eastern Republic as an artificial buffer state by the Bolsheviks. Between February and April of that year mass arrests of anarchists, Maximalists and Socialist-Revolutionaries took place. Worst of all were the actions in Vladivostok on February 26th when members of the underground workers organisations and of irregular units were rounded up. These included 8 Maximalists and 4 anarchists including the editor of the paper Black Flag and the irregular partisans Khanienko and Ustimenko. 38 more, again including Maximalists, Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists, were arrested in Blagoviestchensk on April 10th. A "White Guard" plot was fabricated by the Cheka at a trial of those arrested who were arraigned at Chita. Eight were shot and ten others sentenced to long prison sentences. As an opponent of the Bolsheviks wrote in a letter : " backed up by the Left Socialist-revolutionaries and the Anarchists, the workers and peasants put up during the elections to the Soviet their own independent revolutionary but non-partisan ticket and refused to vote for the Communists".

"The Bolsheviks moved against the anarchists in spring 1918, using the Cheka to attack them and imprison them."

Adapted from a review by Frank Mintz in the French anarchist magazine A Contretemps.

CAMILLE PISSARRO

At the end of the nineteenth century, anarchist ideas had a notable influence not just among workers but also in literary and artistic circles in France.

Many were the writers and painters who enthused at the idea of social revolution. For certain of them, it was no more than a fashion; they abandoned their ideal when success and fortune came. But others stayed faithful all their lives to anarchism. Among them, one finds Camille Pissarro, the hundredth anniversary of whose death was celebrated in 2003.

He was born on St. Thomas, a Caribbean island that was then a Danish possession. His father was a Jewish tradesman of Portuguese origin. He thought that his son would follow him in business, but Camille profited from the visit to St. Thomas of the Danish painter Fritz Melbye and followed him to Venezuela. He started painting landscapes, flora and fauna.

In 1855 at Paris, he took a course in fine arts, without much enthusiasm. He was a pupil of Corot and was influenced by the realism of Courbet. In 1857, at the Swiss academy, he met the future impressionists Monet, Renoir and Cezanne who became his friends.

In 1870, the Franco-Prussian war obliged him to flee to England. He left behind him 1,500 canvasses which were destroyed by the soldiers. The paintings of Constable and turner influenced him. Returning to France, he painted at Louveciennes and at Pontoise, often with Cezanne. His painting became more and more airy, close to that of Monet. His paintings presented the life and work of villagers.

Impressionists

Today, crowds descend in mass on each new Impressionist exhibition. But, in that period, intolerance towards novelty was incredible. In 1874, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Renoir, Cezanne and Degas organised an exhibition. All the press ridiculed them. *Le Figaro* notably wrote: "They opened an exhibition which they said was of painting...5 or 6 mad people, including a woman, met there. These so-called artists took canvasses, colour and brushes, threw several tones around haphazardly and signed the lot". In derision, they were called impressionists. Three years later, they proudly claimed this description.

Despite the interest of several art dealers and collectors, it was difficult to sell the paintings. Pissarro had to produce a lot to support his family (he had 7 children). Often he could not buy his painting material. His material situation did not get better until 1879. In 1884, when he was living at Eragny-sur-Epte an exhibition of his paintings was very successful in the United States.

Pissarro was already aware of anarchist ideas. If he preferred the Republic to a restoration of the monarchy, his letters show that he had no illusions about politicians. As an artist of the avant-garde, he was disgusted by bourgeois society. He refused authority and exalted the individual. Anarchism permitted him to explain his own concept of beauty. The reading of the works of Kropotkin, Proudhon and Grave convinced him of the need for social revolution.

On the technical level, he drew close for a short period to the method of Seurat and Signac (himself an anarchist) and adopted the principle of systematic division (pointillism or neo-impressionism).

Despite numerous criticisms, from 1890 his exhibitions were a great success and the value of his paintings rose.

You do not find open declarations of anarchism in the painting of Pissarro. His work consists of landscapes above all, and several portraits and still lifes. After 1890 he also realised wide views of urban sites (Paris and Rouen). For him the villages and fields are a representation of Utopia and had to be protected for the future society from industrialisation.

Pissarro participated in the Club de l'art social (The social art club) in 1899 alongside the sculptor Rodin, and the anarchist militants Grave, Pouget and Louise Michel. He was a partisan of art for art's sake. "All the arts are anarchist! When they are beautiful and fine!" He was not favourable to art with a social message. Unlike Kropotkin in his book *The Conquest of Bread* he did not think it was necessary to be a peasant to render the poetry of the fields in paintings. He wanted to share the liveliest emotions with his fellows. For him a beautiful piece of art was an attack on bourgeois taste. Pissarro was an optimist who saw an anarchist future soon to come, where people, freed from religious and capitalist ideas, could appreciate his art.

Anarchist art

In 1890 he realised an album of 28 quick pen sketches for two of his nieces. Entitled

'Les Turpitudes Sociales'; they mercilessly depict Money, the Stock exchange, Capital, religion, the Bosses, Wage slavery, Poverty, Hunger and Suicide. Hope is represented by a barricade scene and by a sketch where an old philosopher watches a sun rising over the letters of the word "Anarchie".

Pissarro was not a violent man but he understood the reasons for the anarchist bomb attacks of the 1880s. After the assassination of President Carnot by Caserio, Pissarro had to take refuge in Belgium, like the anarchist men of letters Octave Mirbeau and Bernard Lazare, from the repression against anarchism. There he met the anarchist geographer Elisee Reclus and the poet Emile Verhaeren. His moral and financial support towards victims of repression was important. He helped the children of imprisoned anarchists, Emile Pouget, and Italian comrades in exile. He regularly paid off the debts of the newspapers of Jean Grave, *La Revolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

His friend Jean Grave founded Les Temps Nouveaux in 1895. This newspaper was regularly published up to 1914. Many artists favourable to anarchism contributed to it: Luce, Cross, Signac, Van Rysselberghe, Aristide Delannoy, Valloton, Steinlen, etc. Pissarro only contributed 3 lithographs but his financial support was very regular. He encouraged his sons, Lucien, Georges and Rodo, all artists themselves, to send their own drawings to the paper. He also gave some of his works as prizes in lotteries organised to support the paper.

During the anti-Semitic hysteria surrounding the Dreyfus affair, he struggled against injustice and anti-Semitism alongside Octave Mirbeau and Maximilien Luce, but broke with Degas and Renoir who took opposing positions.

The above article was adopted from one by Felip Equy in the French anarchist paper Le Monde libertaire.

FRENCH CONNECTIONS

A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917-1945 - David Berry. Greenwood Press. 323p. Hardback.

"Distinguishing itself clearly from other movements by its refusal to have anything to do with the putrescence which is bourgeois democracy, anarchism represents, in the eyes of thousands of revolutionary workers, the Barbarian who will raze to the ground the old society collapsing in blood and chaos and guarded by its mercenaries and its corrupt morality, in order to replace it with a higher form of civilization". Charles Ridel, 1938.

This extremely valuable book tells the story of the French anarchist movement's struggles with both organisation and the lack of it. As such, it should be read for its lessons for all anarchist movements, in whatever country they are organising.

Along with a recent work on the Siberian anarchist movement (see separate article) the work underlines the crying need for organisation. All serious anarchists should get hold of a copy of this (try and get it from a library because of the high cost of this hardback) and use it as ammunition in the fight against disorganisation, lack of unity and collective action, fixation on localism to the detriment of a more global approach, and "spontaneity" and anti-organisation elevated to theory.

Both the Russian and Spanish revolutions presented great challenges for the anarchist movement, as did the Second World War and the Occupation. David Berry goes into these problems in detail. He also demolishes the myth much put about by academics and Marxists (sometimes one and the same) that support for anarchism came primarily from one or all of the following categories: the bohemian fringe, intellectuals, the petty bourgeoisie or the lumpenproletariat. Marxists saw anarchism as a political current that was looking backwards, that it represented the interests of a primarily artisanal working class that was being superceded by a proletariat concentrated in factories. Berry shows that whilst it may be true that anarchism was supported in France in the last part of the 19th century by workers in traditional, highly skilled jobs, this was because French working-class consciousness had its roots in these social categories and not among factory workers. He demonstrates that this had changed by the 1890s and anarchists in the artisanal trades were in sharp decline with an increasing number among the concentrated mass industries. His own studies point to a clear majority of blue-collar workers. He also points out that the "petty bourgeois" occupations of some anarchists- café proprietors, market-stall holders, peddlers and small shop-keepers was because many of these had been troublesome workers blacklisted by the bosses. For them these occupations were a last resort. He asserts that there was no

great difference in term of class between members of the Communist Party and the organisation the Anarchist Union (UA) in the 1920s. Furthermore, by the time of the Popular Front the anarchist movement was significantly more "proletarian" than the Socialist Party.

Organisation

Berry is –rightly- scathing about the damaging effects that individualist anarchism had on the anarchist movement in France.This influence decreased in the years after the end of the First world War and the movement was increasingly dominated by anarchist communism.
Many anarchists saw the Russian revolution as a libertarian one, and they interpreted the soviets in an anarchist fashion. A member of the French Anarchist Federation, Lebourg, stated in 1920 that a new revolutionary tradition was emerging. Indeed, he and other anarchists were involved in setting up the Communist Federation of Soviets(FCS). This was the transformation of the first French Communist Party, created in 1919, into something organised on a federal basis.It should be noted that this first Communist Party sought to unite those anarchists, syndicalists and socialists who had adopted an anti-war and class struggle position.
Lebourg justified this regroupment by talking about "the antagonisms which have always divided the revolutionary proletariat into two groups: the centralists and the federalists, those who favour political action and those who favour direct class action, the authoritarian communists and the libertarian communists. We are at present witnessing a regrouping, within the Communist International, of the partisans of these two tendencies".
The regrouping was a brittle one and soon fell apart. Nevertheless, as Berry notes, the sovietism developed in the FCS by anarchists and others called for tighter organization, structured in a libertarian and federalist manner, with a high degree of ideological and practical cohesion. It was anti-parliamentarian and revolutionary and based itself on the working class. It criticised the individualism and idealism of some currents within anarchism.It was inspired by German councilism and Russian sovietism.By mid-1920 the FCS had developed criticisms of the Russian Bolsheviks, whilst defending the Russian revolution as a libertarian one.
Meanwhile the Anarchist Federation and the Federation Communiste Libertaire du Nord – organised around the paper Germinal in northern France- were re-asserting anarchist communism and developing their criticisms of Bolshevism. The paper of the Anarchist Federation, Le Libertaire, increased its print run to 20,000 and Germinal went from irregular to 3 regional editions on a weekly basis. Germinal/FCL also called for tactical and strategic unity. Here too, a clear break with any admiration for Bolshevism came in 1920. The Anarchist Federation's honeymoon with Bolshevism, on the other hand, only really lasted 4 months. The Anarchist Federation transformed itself into the Union Anarchiste in 1920, and criticisms of Bolshevism became more acute, in particular as more news and information reached them from Russia. Antagonisms between anarchists and the official Communist Party broke out into the open in a violent and spectacular way in 1924. At a meeting at the Maison des Syndicats (the House of the Unions) an argument between anarchists and Communists ended with the shooting dead of two apparently unarmed anarchists.
The period of 1924-1934 was a period of crisis for French anarchism. The UA turned itself to the question of organisation. At its 1921 Congress Bastien stated that the removal of both "the elements of extreme individualism" and "the supporters of confusionism" had strengthened anarchist communism. Unfortunately, attempts by him and others to develop more effective organization were to be thwarted. The debate about organization did not really crystallise until 1926, however, with the appearance of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, written by Russian and Ukrainian anarchists in exile in France. For those French anarchists arguing for more effective organisation and action, this document seemed to be a distillation and clarification of all their ideas.
There was fierce argument in the UA and in the wider movement about the Platform. The platformist position triumphed at the 1927 Congress of the UA and part of the opposition left to found their own organisation. However platformist influence was not complete, and the UA- now the Union Anarchiste Communiste revolutionnaire- was to be the battlefield for supporters and opponents of the Platform for several years to come.
By 1934-36 those who supported the Platform were once again in a position to dominate the UA and this coincided with the Popular Front government, the threat of fascism and the Spanish Revolution. Sales of le Libertaire rose sharply as did membership of the UA.- a quadrupling. Indeed one May Day 1937 run of le Libertaire was 100,000! The UA was able to announce in autumn 1937 that it was "the only force having the authority and influence necessary to lead the revolutionary movement". However, despite this resurgence, new recruits were not always retained and compared to the Socialists and the Communists, the movement was still weak.

Spain

Response to the Spanish revolution and the decision by some anarchists to enter the government also divided the movement. The UA mobilised for maximum support for the Spanish revolution as did the anarchosyndicalist union the CGT-SR and the split from the UA, the Federation Anarchiste (FAF). However, there were severe criticisms by the latter two of the stance of he mass Spanish anarchosyndicalist union, the CNT. The UA, on the other hand, was unwilling to criticise the Spanish anarchist movement. In fact, the entry of CNT notables into the Catalan government and the national government, were not met with indignation but with a reserved disquiet. There were arguments in the pages of le Libertaire that these governments were not the normal sort, they were more like anti-fascist fronts! Furthermore, such participation showed how important the CNT and the specific anarchist organisation, the FAI, were, and should be greeted with enthusiasm!
Internally, there were debates in the UA about this question., but it was agreed that any criticism "that may weaken ...solidarity is to be banished from our ranks". The differences between the UA on one hand, and the CGTSR and FAF , on the other, were exacerbated as a result of this. While it is true that the CGTSR/FAF couched their criticisms in a harshly purist and sectarian way, "anti-fascist unity" seems to have blinkered the UA, and gagged them when it came to expressing criticism of CNT-FAI "ministerialism"

Second World War

The Second World War caused the disintegration of the anarchist movement. The UA stated ; " The only just war the workers can make is the social war, class war". In the months leading up to the outbreak, anarchists, demoralised already after their differences over Spain, were under continuous attack from the State. Prudhommeaux of the FAF noted:" Armed revolutionary struggle on a world scale is out of the question in the present situation and given the parlous state of our forces. The retreat has been too generalised since July 1936 for us to have any chance of fighting effectively for our cause, and while we still have so many wounds to heal and are still suffering from so many losses. As for getting ourselves killed for capitalism, too many of our comrades have already fallen in Spain and elsewhere".
The UA decided : " In the event of war, comrades should first of all save their lives in order to be able to create a clandestine organisation which will allow them to remain in contact, even if all propaganda is impossible.." Sauliere, a stalwart of the underground movement in southern France wrote that the group he helped create in Marseilles was "doubly clandestine" because "our propaganda attacked not only fascism, but all those responsible for the war, including capitalism and the Stalinist dictatorship". Sauliere's group produced a poster calling on working class conscripts of all countries to turn their bayonets not on each other but on their own leaders, whether they wear the swastika, the red star, the Order of the Garter, the Cross of Lorraine or the Frankish axe".
It was thanks to Sauliere and those like him, that a post-war anarchist movement was slowly reconstructed, although the old questions and quarrels of the inter-war years, on organisation, on how to relate to the masses, and a whole number of other matters, were to continue to plague that movement. Berry's history is important, and it should be read and learnt from.

The Fountain at the Centre of the World - Robert Newman. Verso, 2003. ISBN 1859845438

This, the third novel by Robert Newman, comedian and activist, is that rarest of things: an explicitly political, indeed openly partisan novel that *doesn't* make you cringe.
An adventure and misadventure story set against the background of capitalist globalisation and the struggle against it, The Fountain at the Centre of the World is, above all else, a book, the humanity of whose central characters, rapidly engage the reader.
If one of the signs of a good book is that, soon after meeting the characters, you care deeply about what happens to them, then this is a *very* good book indeed. The challenges faced by Daniel in the search for his father, challenges which he faces on two continents and in three alien cultures, are soon those of the reader. The final chapters assault senses and emotions equally as a reunion, amidst the chaos of the Seattle protests of 1999, appears possible at last.
Newman has refused to reduce his protagonists to cartoon heroes and villains whilst making no pretence at objectivity or detachment. We are not subjected to any attempt to devalue the actions of the characters through exposing their deep psychological flaws, a popular device used by cynical hacks to explain the motivations of revolutionaries. Values are at work here and they are the values of people who believe not just that another world is possible, but that another way achieving it, beyond NGOs, Union bureaucracies and progressive politicians, is possible too.
A few negatives though. Sometimes the book appears to have reached the shelves in note form, like the author was pushed for time or was writing a screenplay. And in a book that is so obviously meticulously researched and, therefor convincing, it's a pity the Mexican Frente Autentico Trabajo is described as "anarcho-syndicalist". It isn't. Other than these criticisms (the latter one that only an anarcho-trainspotter could make!), this is a remarkable book. Go and order it from your library. Unsurprizingly, it couldn't find a mainstream fiction publisher so it's out on Verso at the inflated price of 10.99 for a paperback.

Louis Lecoin: An Anarchist Life - Sylvain Garel. Kate Sharpley Library. 25p. £1.50

Louis Lecoin came to Paris from the Cher department in 1905.at the age of 16. Here he got a job as a nurseryman. He took part in a gardeners' strike and glasshouses and cold frames suffered as a result of direct action taken by him and others! He was later arrested during a gardeners' demonstration. Because he had attended an anarchist public meeting the night before, his pockets were stuffed with pamphlets and handbills he had picked up there. The judge took him to be an anarchist, and he spent 3 months in jail. On his release he did start moving in an anarchist direction. Called up in 1910, he began to resist commands. When a rail strike broke out, Lecoin refused to be used as a strike-breaker. For this he received 6 months prison. When he came out of the army he joined a group of the Anarchist Communist Federation (FCA) in a working class quarter of Paris, Belleville. The FCA had a membership of 400 and the young Lecoin became its secretary in 1912. He launched himself into anti-militarist activity, and was sentenced to 5 years prison for having printed a poster inciting desertion.
Released in 1916, he refused to answer the draft and was again imprisoned! From here he edited an underground edition of *le Libertaire*, the FCA's paper (although the FCA itself had disintegrated). Lecoin was not released until 1920, by which time he had become a famous militant.
Lecoin's release coincided with the founding of the UA, (see above) which had replaced the FCA. Lecoin became administrator of *le Libertaire*.In 1922, for personal reasons, he resigned this post. He assisted le Libertaire when it became a daily at the end of 1923 for a time, but his major efforts were now concentrated on providing support to Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian-American anarchists under sentence of death in the States, and to the Spanish anarchists Jover, Ascaso and Durruti under threat of extradition to Spain from France. He set up the Right to Asylum Committee and launched the Sacco-Vanzetti Committee.
In the struggle between opponents and supporters of the Platform in the UA, Lecoin was one of those who rejected its proposals but stayed in the UA. Lecoin and his associates pushed for the organisation's congress of 1930 to be open to subscribers to *le Libertaire* as well as to the breakaway group. The result was a defeat for the platformists. Lecoin now took a back seat, involving himself in humanitarian campaigns involving support from many celebrities for his Right to Asylum Committee. Many UA members criticised him for his activities whose principles and methods were "at odds with anarchism's overall principles.
Lecoin was involved in intense activity around support for Spain from 1936 onwards and the UA charged him and a few others with setting up the Free Spain Committee.
Lecoin attempted to stop the looming World War by propaganda. Ten days after war broke out, he helped issue 100,000 copies of a leaflet "Immediate peace". This was a vague humanitarian appeal that failed to refer to class struggle, that assumed that either the French or German states could be persuaded to give up their war plans. Nevertheless, Lecoin was arrested and remained inprison until 1941. Drained physically and psychologically, he

kept his head down for the rest of the war. He was later criticised for his passivity in this period. He was not one of those who was at the foundation meetings of the Anarchist Federation(FA) in 1945. He remained outside of the FA., producing his own review, which was influenced strongly by individualism and humanism. He was involved in a whole series of campaigns based around celebrities. One of them, around conscientious objection in 1958, included a Protestant pastor and a Catholic abbot. Lecoin carried on in this fashion until his death in 1971, often being arrested and imprisoned, and sometimes going on hunger strike. Alongside this was his activity in the workplace (he had been a proof-reader on and off since 1928). Lecoin was a brave individual, willing to risk imprisonment and often mobilising against injustice and attacks on anarchism. Witness his interventions around the expulsion of Daniel Cohn-Bendit from France in 1968, and the murder of the anarchist Pinelli by the Italian state in 1970., as well as the significant sum of money he collected for the FA's premises in 1962 when it was bombed by the far-right OAS. Set against this is the misgivings felt by many in the anarchist movement about Lecoin's reputation as a loose cannon and the dubious nature of his campaigns.

In David Berry's book reviewed above, space is given to the Revision Group, which produced a theoretical magazine of the same name. This group had many trenchant criticisms of the anarchist movement in France.One of its militants, Charles Ridel was scathing in his criticisms of "supposedly anarchist campaigns void of any revolutionary content and headed by committees full of 'independents' "hams and posers with a tear always at the ready"". For Ridel, any campaign, any movement, any action which was not anchored in the class struggle lost all validity for a revolutionary anarchist and resulted in the anarchist organisation becoming a "mere annexe of the political 'left'". This is aimed at some of the campaigns the UA was involved in, and in particular those that Lecoin initiated.

The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo - Noam Chomsky

Pluto Press, London. www.plutobooks.com. ISBN 0-7453-1633-6 1999

You may be wondering why, after September 11 and war with Afghanistan and Iraq, we didn't choose to review one of Chomsky's more recent offerings, such is the pace he is able to churn them out. But it's right now that parts of the left are being challenged to take a hard look back at Kosovo and wondering if they got it wrong. Alongside a US under Clinton, this was Tony Blair's (and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's) so-called humanitarian war that is now understood for what it really was - a media manipulating dupe by NATO - a dupe made all the more powerful by the support of left-leaning UK papers like the Guardian and Independent, and worse still by the disarray in the radical left and even some of the anarchist press (see Organise! 52 - Confusion over Kosovo). Whilst we managed a couple of articles, Chomsky was already there with this book barely months after the bombing commenced on March 24 in 1999, dismantling the moral justification and exposing the lies by his analysis of contemporary texts and press out puts.

Much of the first part of the book, looking at the NATO allies' past record in warfare, will be preaching to the converted for many Organise! readers, but this should not put anyone off. The book contains a step-by-step review of events before and immediately leading up to the bombing, including diplomatic manoeuvrings.

NATO wanted to bomb, and ensured that diplomacy to avoid war would fail, but also deliberately misinterpreted post-war peace agreements over who would be in military command (helping to explain the `surprise` take-over of Pristina airport by Russian troops - remember that?).

Chomsky also shows how the low-level conflict in the previous year was distorted (with three quarters of 2000 recorded deaths actually being attributable to the Albanian KLA, a quarter to the Serbian Army) and that the results of the bombing \endash the Serbian Army retributions and mass exodus of the huge numbers of people we saw on our TV screens - was completely anticipated by the allies, all from NATO's own analysis!

Rounding up, Chomsky sees a US further out of control of international law and in its own words taking a post-Cold War strategic posture that benefits it to have an "irrational and vindictive" edge, for example outside of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty towards first use of mini-nukes that can be used against multiple smaller `rogue` targets. All of this is intended to give credibility to US power that is mirrored in the main reason for the Kosovo war, according to Chomsky: NATO's credibility. We are also reminded how our own George Robertson, British Defence Minister, was rewarded with leadership of NATO for toeing the US line.

Now we've had the Iraq occupation, but also a little reported upsurge in violence by nationalists in Kosovo this March and a swing to the far right in Serbia (something we predicted in Organise! 51 - Kicked in the Balkans Again. It's not NATO vs. UN any more - Europe is too divided on the Iraq war for that - it's US vs. UN, although before we get too rosy-eyed about the UN we can also turn to this book to remind us of the terrible effects of sanctions. If you're looking for more up to date material making the link with today's Iraq, you can read Chomsky's `Hegemony or Survival` (2003), or MediaLens' David Edwards' article `Kosovo and Iraq - Same Bombs, Different Lies` (April 6, 2004) that is easily found on the Web with lots more references. But, being 5 years older, The New Military Humanism helps greatly in cutting through the smokescreen raised by September 11 and the `war on terrorism,` revealing a US foreign policy that has remained for the most part constant, irrespective of political party.

If you have a book you would like us to review, please send it to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

WHAT GOES IN ORGANISE!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

ORGANISING FOR INTERNATIONAL RESISTANCE

The IAF was founded in 1968 in Carrarra, Italy by the Iberian (Spain and Portugal), Italian and French Federations. These federations combined several generations of anarchists from those who fought in the Spanish Revolution to young people active in the new struggles of the sixties. In subsequence years, the original three were joined by Bulgaria (in exile), Argentina and Germany. This year the IAF has been significantly expanded with the affiliation of the Czech and Slovak Federations, the Russian federation (the Association of Anarchist Movements- ADA) and ourselves, the Anarchist Federation of Great Britain.

The collapse of state capitalism in Eastern Europe has resulted in an upsurge of interest in anarchism amongst a new generation of militants looking for an alternative to both capitalism and Bolshevism. There has been an increase in anarchist organisations and many of these look towards the IAF for links with anarchists in other countries where the tradition of anarchism has a long history. In addition to the affiliation of the Czech, Slovaks and Russians, close links have been established with Belarus, Poland, Slovenia and Serbia.

The experience of the AF in Britain is in many ways similar to that of our Czech and Slovak comrades. Our movement lacks a continual tradition, embedded in the working class. Instead, the anarchist movement is small and fragile, often taking the form of ghettoised lifestylism with no serious orientation to the working class. Our contact with the historic anarchist federations has been an inspiration, encouraging us in our aim of building a movement based on the working class in the community and in the workplace.

However, there are some key differences with the experience of the federations in Eastern Europe who have lived through the oppression of state capitalism and Bolshevism.

Unlike in Britain, where Leninism and Trotskyism is still influential, the natural home for anti-capitalist activity in Eastern Europe is with anarchism, which rejects both capitalism and any attempt to recreate the state. This strengthens us in our own analysis of Bolshevism, in all its guises, as a bankrupt and dangerous movement which has no place in the revolutionary transformation of society.

International of Anarchist Federations

L'internationale des Federations Anarchistes

Internacional de las Federaciones Anarquistas

Internazionale delle Federazioni Anarchiche

The Congress was very productive and was a model of libertarian decision-making in action. Work was done in commissions which allowed for maximum participation of delegates and then overall decisions were reached through discussion, debate and consensus. It resulted in a number of initiatives to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of international work. Expanding links with Latin America will be a priority as well as supporting the growing anarchist movement in Eastern Europe. There will be a new website, annual magazine and regular international day of action. The Anarchist Federation will be contributing to the work of co-ordinating international activity and enhancing communication, through its new role as the Secretariat of the IAF. We look forward to the opportunity of putting into practice one of our basic principles- that anarchism can only be achieved through international struggle and co-operation.

The Seventh Congress of the International of Anarchist Federations was held over the Easter week-end, 2004, in Proudhon's birthplace, Besancon in France.

LETTERS

Is Organise! Still Slipping?

A couple of issues back you quipped: `Is Organise! slipping?` Well, yes, quite frankly, is the answer, with '0:60' confirming that prognosis in veritable spades. So much so you might even consider re-titling the 'zine 'The Bolshevik Bugle' - Alarmingly regressive is the only way to describe it, containing as it does tedious recyclings of the likes of long-dead, tenuous, some would say dubious anarchists-turned-Bolshies such as Arshinov and Serge. The review of Skirda's book, for example, 'Facing the Enemy' appeared as little more than a ponderous excuse to revive (resuscitate!) the dated, discredited and very rapidly disinherited document 'The Organisational Platform.' Hardly anyone of the time it first saw the light of day, including nearly all anarchist communists, were of the opinion that there was anything useful about it as a manifesto for libertarian revolution. What's changed that it should be seen as the holy grail 80 odd years on? There is something acutely embarassing about the way supposedly progressive anti-authoritarians of the 21st century seem to be obsessed with pushing this ancient vanguardist obscurity. Similarly with the Trotsky-loving never-quite-confirmed 'anarchist' Victor Serge, subject of another book review in the journal. Please, what possible relevance can someone like Serge hold for the world as it is today? Are Bolshevist sympaticos like Arshinov and Serge really where the focus for debate needs to be in these massively dangerous and turbulent times?

Another contributor goes to inordinate lengths to talk up an outfit (the ABC/F) that in many respects in recent years has let the movements prisoners down badly. They dumped, for instance, U.S. working class prisoner Harold H.Thompson for no sound reason whatsoever. At least one ABCF clique in America was known to be nearer the diktats of Chairman Mao than anything that could be identified as anarchism of any sort. Only a year or so ago U.K. anarcho prison activist Mark Barnsley publicly alleged (Freedom 63/5) ABC elements here were corrupt. Did anyone bother to verify Barnsley's statement? Was Harold Thompson approached for his thoughts on the ABCF? Few would go as far as to deny the good work done by the ABC down the years, but they simply were not beyond reproach as the feature would have' it.

It is stated in the blurb panel promoting AF newsheet 'Resistance'... 'more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary ideas.' What, like ideas circa 1780 as in the 'Whiteboys of Ireland' feature? Sure, an interesting enough reflection on little-known Irish history in itself, but again, a spur to contemporary revolutionary anarchism, perhaps not. Wouldn't an in-depth piece on refugees/asylum seekers have been more appropriate given the current political climate where those forced into exile are getting hammered right, left and centre? Or a closer look at Bush's Amerikkka hell-bent on subjecting the world to its own ideological recipe of aggressive, rapacious capitalism? There is the reek of something very unpleasant in the air on both sides of the Atlantic and the ideas anarchist communists should be articulating are ideas that will counter the devastating implications of Bush, Blair and Berlusconi policies before its too late.

Oh, and the letters page a correspondent, bemoaning that SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) workers had been taken to task in '0:59' for engaging in work involving the suffering of animals, is wrong also. Unless and until workers become self-consciously critical of the work they accept payment for then nothing, absolutely nothing about this society will change for the better, never mind take on revolutionary impetus.

Still, the reviewer of the Serge book at least is deserving of some credit for acknowledging that Serge himself had, '...lost hope in the power of the working class to overthrow capitalism...' Substitute `will` (or desire or both) for 'power' and we'd be much closer to a truth the class struggle movement needs to recognise about itself in these times. Anarchist communism is a worthy aspiration. It could even be an imperative if there is to be any lasting hopes of saving the planet from a rampant, possibly fascistic capitalism of the near future. Cannot the AF turn its eyes in that direction,the starting point today, rather than facing backwards as it seems to be doing much of the time? If the ideas of yesterday were as bright as some appear to believe they were then there would be no need of people like us, would there?

For an anarchist communist world,
Frankie Dee, Merseyside

A letter for Organise!?

Send your letters to:
Organise! Letters, AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

In Reply:

We are a federation of organisational anarchists. We strongly believe that a degree of self-organisation and co-operation will be necessary both to confront, dissolve and destroy capitalism and meet the needs and aspirations of up to six billion people in the free society of the future. By that we don't mean an organisation, one group deciding for the rest how the revolution will be brought about or carried through. We recognise the vast diversity of experience and thought that is – inexorably – taking humanity towards the free society but by many different roads and from many different starting points. So we think that books like Skirda's Facing The Enemy are useful in examining the successes and failures of organisational anarchism and making the case for collective action. But thinking well of some degree of organisation and unity in action does not make us raving Bolsheviks, as Frankie Dee asserts, not by a long-shot. Regarding The Organisational Platform for a General Union of Anarchists (to give it its full title), some members of the Anarchist Federation think it's a useful document, written as it was by people who had spent many years fighting an authoritarian revolution with some success and who came to the failures of European anarchism with fresh eyes; others of us think it less useful. The review points to the many differing opinions about The Platform voiced by anarchists and argues – as we ourselves would – that doctrinal differences can and should be put aside in pursuit of a common goal of freedom. There is strength in the unity of ideas and action, which is why the Anarchist Federation was formed. But that is a long way from the sort of unified and disciplined organisation of anarchists the authors of The Platform proposed. If you're interested in the kinds of organisation we think help people struggling to bring about a freer world, you'll find some ideas in As We See It, The Role of The Revolutionary Organisation or Beyond Resistance, all currently available from the AF.

That diversity we value in the movement comes not just from our own experiences but also the ideas and experiences of other anarchists and libertarians. We don't apologise for bringing to the attention of people the history, thought and experience of others so that they can decide for themselves what can be learnt or enjoyed from it. Perhaps Frankie Dee prefers that people like Victor Serge, Piotr Arshinov (executed by Stalin in 1937, some anarchist-turned-bolshevik) or Nestor Makhno were simply airbrushed out of anarchist history? Humans are fallible people. We fairly describe their successes and failures, their good ideas and bad, their flaws as well as their gifts. That doesn't make us apologists for their ideas or obsessed with past failures and history; we aren't.

Frankie Dee unfairly thinks us backward-looking. Sure, Organise! #60 had historical examples of self-organisation and resistance to the ruling class but it also had articles on Iraq, Oil, the Firefighters Strike and the continuing struggle of the people of Argentina against globalisation and free-market capitalism. It's a pity he didn't wait for Organise #61 before rushing to print – it had articles on direct action against the Iraq War in Ireland and the North-East, more on the struggle in Argentina and features on The New Economy, strikes at Bombardier and the current state of industrial struggle and the unions – as up to date as it gets. Organise! is not Socialist Worker, with its numbing repetition of strike, struggle, organise. It's a magazine of ideas promoting revolutionary anarchism, which requires more than endlessly harping on about Bush's Amerika – we leave that sort of thing to George Monbiot and Naomi Klein, bless 'em.

Finally, regarding the article on the ABC, Frankie Dee is reading too much from it. The article he refers to in Organise! #60 (Yelensky's Fable) is about 2400 words long; the section on the ABCF is about 70 words and simply says that it is still "very active". The rest of the article is a history of support for anarchist prisoners and the state's response from Tsarist times to the present. It steers clear of taking sides in disputes between what are – let's face it – fairly arcane matters between a relatively small number of anarchists in just one part of the world and concentrates on the history of the ABC, warts and all. We thought it was a useful balancing of accounts on behalf of people who were there, who are sometimes accused and criticised but who cannot, because they have been murdered or imprisoned by the state, reply to their critics. Sure the ABC has made mistakes from time to time but the article admits that. It rightly focuses on the "good work done by the ABC down the years", a fact that Frankie Dee acknowledges but underestimates.

Frankie Dee knows us well and we're always glad to publish letters from one of our most faithful readers. In this case his blunderbuss has hit many targets but with little effect. We're trying to build and be part of a global movement with huge diversity and one purpose - revolution. The Anarchist Federation has worked out some pretty good ideas on most things and is far more focussed on action and progress than on minor differences of opinion within other parts of the movement, which we respect but won't let hold us back. Lets keep it real.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

The campaign to secure his release continued. Finally in 1930 after 20 years of hell, Radowitzky was released. Expelled from Argentina, he took refuge in neighbouring Uruguay, again taking up the work of a mechanic. His involvement with the anarchist movement there and the struggle against the dictator Gabriel Terras in 1933 led to his arrest and deportation to the isolated Isla de Flores. When the Spanish revolution broke out, Simon headed for Spain in 1936. By now he was in his mid-forties and in poor health. He went to the Aragon front where he fought with the anarchist 28th Division led by Gregorio Jover. Here he met Antonio Casanova, originally from Galicia in North Spain, who had emigrated to Argentina at an early age and had been one of the founders of the Federación Anarco-Comunista Argentina in 1935. The two became good friends. Later Simon worked in Barcelona for the cultural division of the mass anarcho-syndicalist union, the CNT. At a time of strict rationing he happened to get hold of a bottle of milk that he immediately gave to a pregnant woman that he felt needed it more than him.

With Franco's victory, he had to flee to France, where like so many others, he was interned in the concentration camp at St. Cyprien. From there, he got away to Mexico. Here, a poet managed to get him a job as a clerk at the Uruguayan Consulate. At the end of the World War, he worked in the Mexican branch of the International Rescue and Relief Committee to help political refugees in Europe, alongside the German anarchist Augustin Souchy, sending CARE food packages. He wrote for anarchist publications in Mexico.

Simon's last years were plagued by ill health. The prison years had taken their toll. When not in hospital, he lived in a shabby attic of an apartment building. He died of a heart attack on February 29, 1956 whilst working in a toy factory.

"With Radowitzky's passing one of the last social revolutionaries of the Russian Revolution of 1905, one of the finest idealists of the international labour movement was gone." Augustin Souchy.

Postscript: In November 2003, a popular assembly, meeting in the Plaza named after Ramon Falcon, voted to change its name to that of Simon Radowitzky.

REVOLUTIONARY PORTRAITS: SIMON RADOWITZKY

Szymon Radowicki (more usually known in Argentina as Simon Radowitzky) was born on either the 10th of September or November 1891 into a workers family in the Jewish community in the little Ukrainian village of Stepanice (Stapanesso).

The family moved to the industrial city of Ekaterinoslav, because Simon's father wanted his children to get a good education, and Simon received a rudimentary knowledge of reading, writing and maths. At the age of 10 he had to leave school to work as a blacksmith's apprentice because of his family's poverty. He had to sleep on a hard cot under his master's dining table. From here, he heard the revolutionary conversations of his master's daughter and her friends. At the age of 14, he got work in a hardware factory. He took part in his first strike for shorter hours, but was wounded in the chest by a sabre wielded by a Cossack at a street demonstration. He was forced to lie in bed for 6 months of recuperation. He was then sentenced to four months imprisonment for the distribution of leaflets. In 1905, during the revolutionary events, and despite being still only 15 years old, he was elected second secretary of the soviet of the factory where he worked. With the repression that followed the 1905 Revolution, Simon was forced into exile to escape being deported to Siberia.

He arrived in Argentina in March 1908, where he got work as a mechanic. He read the anarchist press there, in particular La Protesta, the paper of the FORA, the anarcho-syndicalist union that organised among the workers. He associated with a group of Russian anarchist exiles that included the intellectuals Petrov, Karaschin, Ragapelov, Scutz and Buwitz and lived in a tenement with some of these. On the 1st of May 1909, he participated in the big workers' demonstration in the Plaza Lorea. A cavalry detachment under the command of the police chief Colonel Ramon Falcon charged the crowd and 12 workers were killed and 100 seriously wounded. In the following "Red Week" Falcon pursued his terror against the workers. The police began to fan an anti-Semitic campaign against "Russian Jewish instigators". Radowitzky, like the German Wilckens was a gentle soul and advocated the use of as little violence as possible in the revolutionary struggle. Like Wilckens, he was horrified and disgusted by the murders of workers and proposed to act. Falcon was returning from the funeral of the prison service, when Radowitzky, lying in wait along the route, threw a bomb into his coach. Falcon and his secretary were mortally wounded. Radowitzky was apprehended not far away. At his trial, the public prosecutor asked for the death penalty. Radowitzky's cousin was able to produce a birth certificate that showed that Simon was only 18 and thus was excused the death penalty. The judge sentenced him to indefinite imprisonment, and to be put in solitary on bread and water for 20 days near the anniversary of Falcon's death.

Radowitzky gained the respect of both prisoners and jailers in the National Penitentiary where he was incarcerated. Following a breakout of 13 prisoners that included 2 famous anarchists, Radowitzky was transferred to the dreadful prison of Ushuaia in Patagonia in 1911. He was one of 62 prisoners transported there in the coalbunker of a ship. At the end of the voyage the prisoners were blackened with coal dust and their ankles ulcerated by leg-irons.

At Ushuaia, Radowitzky showed immense strength of character. He stood up to all the humiliations and indignities meted out, and moreover, became the spokesperson of all the prisoners, leading hunger strikes and "protest choirs". When the prison officials realised his standing among the prisoners they increased their torments. Lanterns were swung in front of his face every half hour at night. He was anally raped by the deputy governor and 3 warders in 1918.

When the anarchist movement in Buenos Aires heard this, they launched a campaign, covering the walls with messages demanding his freedom and publishing a pamphlet on the treatment he had received. Radowitzky "the martyr of Usuaia" became the subjects of songs sung by Creole payadores (songsters) at workers' meetings and assemblies. The liberal press took up the call for his freedom, but it was not forthcoming. Tired of waiting, some anarchists planned his escape. In league with a smuggler, they got Radowitzky on board his schooner. But the Chilean Navy intercepted them and Radowitzky was returned to prison after just 23 days of freedom. He was punished with solitary confinement and half rations up to January 1921.

Continued on page 25

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

Want to join the AF? Want to find out more?

I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.
Please put me on the AF's mailing list.
Name _____
Address _____
_____

Please tick/fill in as appropriate and return to:
AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX.
Anarchist Federation (Ireland), PO Box 505, Belfast BT12 6BQ.

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THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN ARGENTINA - PART TWO

plus: reviews, letters, revolutionary portraits and more

the magazine of the anarchist federation

editorial - where now?

A number of strikes, with many of them unofficial, have broken out in Britain over the last few months. Postal workers have continued what is now almost a tradition, whilst baggage handlers at the airports have taken militant action. There is seething discontent among the firefighters and this has exploded in a number of actions. Steel erectors at the Wembley Stadium came out on strike, as did couriers. Welcome signs that the working class is not dead and is not quite ready to give up the fight.

However militancy among British workers is considerably lower than in the rest of Europe. The manufacturing industry has been decimated, as has mining. Much of this has accelerated under the Labour government. Both manufacturing and service industries are looking further afield for cheap labour. Even the call centres with their low pay are at risk from being farmed out to somewhere cheaper like India. The rhythm of closures is speeding, with their announcement on the news a regular feature. Despite deals on productivity plants like Jaguar are being closed. And where there are no closures productivity deals are being forced on workers with the connivance of the unions.

Another way the bosses have grabbed back profit is through the increase in the working week. Workers are expected to stay late at work or take home work for the evening or weekend or work through the lunchbreak. The average working week is now 48 hours in Britain- we work longer hours and have fewer holidays than the rest of Western Europe.

Sick pay

But the drive to increase profit isn't just confined to making people work harder. There have been increasing calls from bosses' think tanks to attack sick pay. Tesco has already launched some pilot schemes. Whether workers are genuinely ill - sometimes through the stress of their jobs and overwork- or are taking back time with a "sickie" then the intention is there among increasing numbers of employers to clamp down and to remove sick pay benefits. General practitioners have been recently warned not to write so many sick notes.

Pensions

Another important issue in an increasingly ageing population is pensions. The State is determined sooner or later to make a move on this, just as it has done in other parts of Europe. There, mass mobilisations threaten to halt any schemes to increase the pension age and force people to work beyond 65. The whole issue may prove to be a major mobilising factor.

Another way in which the boss class has attempted to retain its profits is with the bringing in of cheap immigrant labour. This is particularly obvious in the service industries and in farm work. One

of the ways to mobilise in the countryside against the reactionary bloc of rural aristocrats, bigfarmers is to consider organising amongst immigrant workers. Similarly in the towns, agitation and propaganda must be aimed at immigrant workers emphasising working class unity.

Yet another way for the employers to maintain their profits is through casualisation, short-term contracts and "precarious" jobs. A lot of thought- and action- now needs to be put into this problem and again agitation and propaganda needs to be aimed at this area.

The political situation

Leninism in all its forms is in severe crisis, as is social democracy including within the Labour Party.Unfortunately, developments on the Continent and in other parts of the world have not been matched at such a fast rate in Britain. In particular, whilst old-style Communist Party politics is rapidly waning, Trotskyism, despite a certain shrinkage, still has a death-like grip in many areas of struggle. Recent events have highlighted how damaging this grip is, and we may now be seeing a turning point. The stranglehold of the Socialist Workers Party over the last European Social Forum, their collusion not only with Ken Livingstone and his Trotskyist allies of Socialist Action within the Greater London Authority, but with the police has caused revulsion both here and in the rest of Europe.This may well unleash a crisis within that organisation. This crisis was already developing with the SWP's various exploits within their "anti-capitalist" front Globalise Resistance, within the cartel of Leninists and disillusioned Labourites of , the Socialist Alliance, and within Respect cobbled together between George Galloway MP, the Muslim Association of Britain and the SWP.

If the SWP goes into crisis and starts disintegrating this will create new political space. The SWP's increasingly arrogant and authoritarian behaviour, its readiness to ignore and insult its potential allies, and its zeal at forming good working relationships with the Mayor of London and the highly paid officials of Socialist Action, as well as its willingness to collaborate with the police, may cause it to fragment. A large number of disillusioned members will then be outside the SWP. The other Leninist groups smaller in size than the SWP may not necessarily benefit as they themselves have many long-term problems, one of which is their failure to grow and to increase their influence.

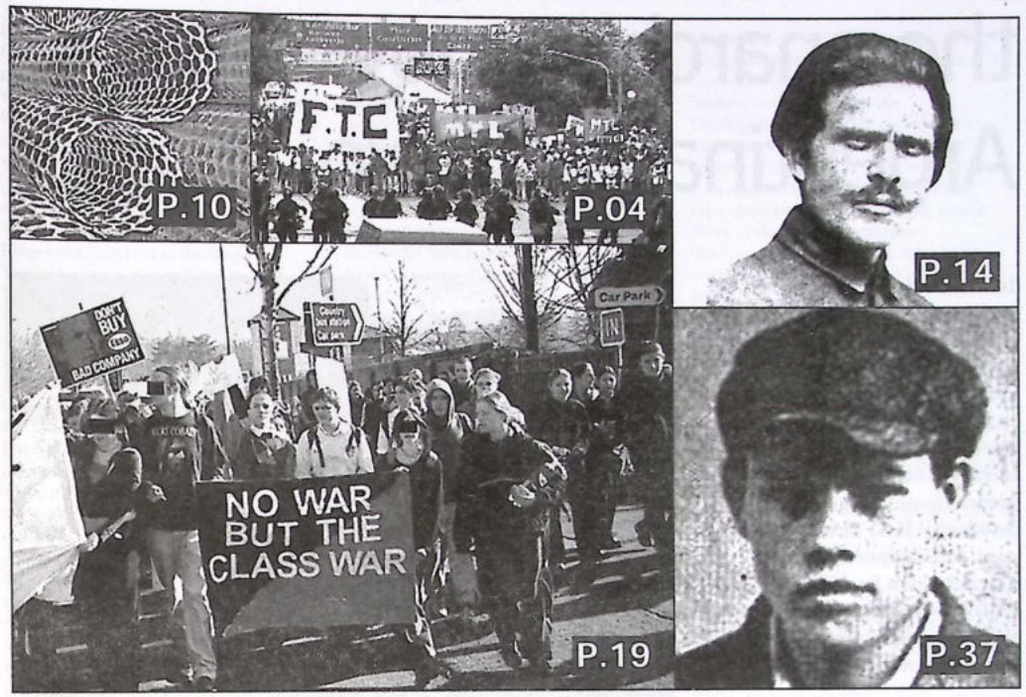
The anarchists

Could the anarchists benefit from this possible new space? For many years the SWP has attracted fairly large numbers of people who are discontented with the system. Their Leninism has often come with a pseudo-libertarian turn of phrase and people who might have turned to a confident and organised anarchist movement have joined the SWP.

But unfortunately what passes for an anarchist movement is small and is divided into a number of different groups and organisations. There is often mistrust and sometimes outright hostility between these groups. There is an unwillingness to work together. Unlike the various organisational traditions in other parts of Europe, there is often mistrust and opposition to organising beyond the local level. This has been made into a theory by some who advocate the creation of strong local groups before national organisations can be created. The AF has never been opposed to the creation of local groups; in fact our members have often been key figures in the creation of such groups.

Most importantly, there is a distinct lack of class analysis inside what passes for a movement. There is an unwillingness to relate to class struggle. Among certain parts of this "movement" there is an obsession with mobilised around large calendar events , like May Day, G8 meetings and the ESF and much time is devoted towards preparation in the preceding months. In the past, anarchist mobilisations around these events have been useful, but now there is an increasing ritualisation. There is no substitute for painstaking propaganda and agitation directed towards the concerns of the mass of the population. There has to be a break with the politics of the stunt and the big event. Anarchists have to turn themselves more and more to making themselves relevant. We have suggested in this article that we must organise around problems like casualisation, the attack on sick pay, and pensions. This should be on top of basic anarchist agitation and propaganda aimed, not at the ghettoes of the left and of anarchism, but at the mass of the working class.

The Independent Working Class Association has attempted to tackle this problem and seems to have attracted the admiration of some anarchists. Unfortunately their approach is marred by electoralism, among other problems. Some local groups have engaged in work directed towards the mass of the population and their everyday problems, without falling into the trap of electoralism. This approach has to be made general if British anarchism is to stand any chance at all of growing and profitting from the developing situation.



Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on. The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 15th March 2005. All contributions should be sent to: AF, c/o 84b Whitechapel Hight Street, London, E1 7QX. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

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The Anarchist Federation is a member of the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF) - www.ifa-iaf.org

the anarchist movement in Argentina part two

In the last issue of Organise! we had detailed account of the present day anarchist movement in Argentina. Unfortunately some of the text become mangled in layout! So you can read that the Jose Ingenieros Peoples library is supported by the International Libertarian Solidarity(ILS) This is not the case. ILS supports the Organisacion Socialista Libertaria (OSL) The section on this group was inadvertently left out of the account.

Going back to the Jose Ingenieros Library, the original article pointed out that the Library was seen by many as a "neutral area" and had good relations with the FLA, the FOR A, and La Protesta and that a few veterans of the movement were involved. Its archives are not large, but it has a good and extensive book collection.

La Protesta
Again, a section on this paper was not included in the last Organise! It was a paper created for the anarchist movement in 1897 and has gone beyond its 8220th issue. It has 8 pages and is distributed widely throughout Buenos Aires. It collaborates regularly with another group Libertad.

Libertad
The French visitor did not meet this group, but it has a bimonthly paper, with a standard 8-page format. It organises joint actions with La Protesta on the 1st May. Each group has no more than a dozen members each. The print run of these papers is around 500, with perhaps 1,000 run for La Protesta, some of which are sent abroad. Their anarchism appears to be of the 'classical' kind.

The Organisacion Socialista Libertaria (OSL)
Again the French comrade did not meet this group. They appear to gather together a handful of militants, and their main activity seems to be to publish En La Calle (in the street), journal of "organised anarchism" a well presented monthly with 8 pages, with a print run of 1,000, of which some are distributed abroad. Its members seem to be active in the unemployed associations of greater Buenos Aires. The appearance and distribution of their journal appears to be largely to financial assistance from the ILS. And now for some updates on anarchist groups not mentioned before.

The independents of La Plata
A handful of anarchist militants mostly from the same anarchist family! They have worked for several years in several poor neighbourhoods. They have started to develop a people's library in a squatted building on squatted land. They constructed their buildings from recovered materials. After the social explosion of December 2001 they set up a restaurant, a soup kitchen, educational support, a clothes bank, a bread oven and enlarged their buildings before recreating the same sort of thing in a shanty town. They have access to 80 social aid plans. They have a plan to create a metal workshop and to raise rabbits to supply their restaurant. They have met the same problems as all the other unemployed movements- how to involve people, make them self-active, share knowledge, and not fall into reformism. Some of them participate in the Letra Libre Collective, which is planning to publish some works on anarchism. These should be appearing soon.

The Alberto Ghiraldo Popular Library of Rosario
This was apparently founded in the 1940s by anarchists in Rosario, a fairly large town several hours bus journey from the capital. Twenty people are involved, among them quite a few young people. Their archives are small, but they have a good stock of pamphlets. They put on video projections and organise debates. Quite a few young people and several people involved in the assemblies have moved closer to them since December 2001. Their financial situation is tight, they just manage to pay for rent etc with their subscriptions and donations and benefits. The library welcomes the meetings of a little circle of social studies that is not specifically anarchist and those of a recently created anarchist collective "Thought and Action".

The Anarchist Movement of Workers Liberation (MALO) of Bariloche
This group is a sort of political "miracle". The 1st May 2002, anarchists of Cholila, Esquel and Bolson in Patagonia went by bus to Bariloche, several hours journey from Esquel, for a small action in support of political prisoners. At the entrance to the town, the bus was halted by a piquetero blockade, (burning tyres, with people in hoods). They got down to see what was going on and saw a black flag floating above the piqueteros. They approached and made contact with some young people overjoyed to discover other anarchists in the area!! These FORA comrades discovered the existence of MALO created by 30 young people from a shanty town who lived on the recycling of waste. The MALO has existed for 4 years, putting roadblocks up every 1st May and involving themselves in a sort of informal piquetero movement in the shantytown, and operating a form of taxing on the flow of merchandise. With money from this, they buy food wholesale for a people's restaurant to feed the children of the shantytown or to support a mother of one of them killed by a policeman 2 years before. After this murder, they overturned a bus with other inhabitants of the shantytown and went to the town centre to smash shop windows.
They are all young. The oldest is 21-22 years old. It seems that they came across some anarchist propaganda. After having discussed and looked around for more information on the subject, they decided to set up a group, which was joined by some of the young people of the shantytown. Their political level is low and they have a strong tendency towards illegalism. Some of the young have been affected by the squalor of their surroundings, and have problems with alcohol, drugs and some are involved in burgling the houses of the rich and the middle classes. They also pillaged a warehouse belonging to the Church. This pillage undertaken by the majority of the neighbourhood, led to a battle of several hours with the police who were finally forced to retreat. The warehouse is still in the hands of the MALO.
Junkies recruited by local politicians to intimidate the people of the neighbourhood attacked the neighbourhood restaurant in broad daylight. Shots were fired at the canteen where women and children were preparing food. Some young people of the MALO have since acquired weapons for self-defence.
They took part in the first anarchist congress in Patagonia in January 2004 and hoped to organise the second in their warehouse. A fierce police repression has now fallen on them and a group of riot cops has been stationed at Bariloche where it regularly makes raids on the shantytown. Some members of the MALO have been threatened, beaten and searched, and some have withdrawn from activity because of this.
Other groups exist at Cordoba and Marr Del Plata. They have been active for several years. A little anarchist centre exists at Cordoba. A little anarchist network engaged in sporadic activities exists at Viedma. They have named themselves after Antonio Soto, a FORA militant who animated the great strikes of agricultural workers in Patagonia in 1921. Several individuals are involved sporadically in an Anarchist Black Cross at Buenos Aires (circulation of info on revolutionary political prisoners) Some individuals have began to produce and distribute a newssheet in Buenos Aires, El Ilegal. Some groups of anarcho-punks exist who have flyposted and brought out fanzines before disappearing.
The Argentinian anarchist movement is fragmented, communication is difficult because of the vastness of the country, there is an acute lack of funds and of militant experience among the new young people. There is also a certain amount of ideological confusion. There must be no more than 300-350 organised anarchists in the country.
All these groups need support. If visiting, bring papers, stickers and information on the movement in your country, some money, anarchist pamphlets in Spanish, and stuff like envelopes, glue, etc. It's best to learn a little Spanish. A good idea would be to think of twinning with a particular group to support it morally and financially. See the list below.
One final word of caution. A group exists in Buenos Aires called Socialismo Libertario with a vaguely libertarian phraseology. They are Trotskyists!

anarchist contacts in Argentina

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This, the final part of the *In the Tradition* series, looks at developments in international libertarian thought and struggle over the last 20 or so years.

in the tradition part five

We finished part Four with a brief look at the Miners Strike of 1984-1985 and the impact this brutal struggle had upon the revolutionary movement. The strike showed the combatitivity, the fierce intelligence and the practical capability of an historic section of the working class, the mineworkers and their friends and families. It also showed the severe limitations of trade unionism and of the left and the weakness of the revolutionary libertarian movement.

Demanding the impossible?

The leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers repeatedly called for solidarity action from other union *leaderships*, to, inevitably, no avail. Sections of the Leninist left either called for increases in mass picketing (SWP) or for the Trades Union Congress to call a General Strike (Militant, WRP). The former 'tactic' was shown to be, on its own, a dead end at Orgreave where the massed miners were battered and dispersed in cossack style by mounted police. The second tactic was merely reflective of the bankruptcy of Trotskyism, most of whose partisans could think no further than calling upon the bureaucrats to show a lead, or to encourage workers to "come through the experience" of demanding the impossible from that bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, rank and file NUM members, their families, friends and supporters were organising Hit Squads to target scabs and their supporters and to defend their communities. The traditions of Trade Union practice still held most miners back from attempting to reach out to other sectors of the working class directly, not via the bureaucracies of the official union structures. This widening of the struggle would not have guaranteed victory, but its failure to emerge condemned the struggle to defeat.

The anarchist response

The anarchist and libertarian communist movement responded to the strike in fractured way, reflecting the fractured nature of that movement.

Although libertarians added to the numbers on picket lines, at demonstrations and in general support work, there was little co-ordinated activity and a very limited amount of serious analysis. Small collectives such as the London Workers Group (an open group of councillists, anarchists, autonomists etc.) the Wildcat group in Manchester and Careless Talk group in Staffordshire were amongst a minority who attempted to address the issues (such as the need to criticise the NUM and the need for the struggle to be spread by workers themselves) that were being ignored elsewhere.

Class War

One group, which emerged during the Miners Strike, and which was to subsequently have a considerable impact upon the libertarian movement in Britain and beyond, was Class War. The Class War group and its eponymous tabloid-style newspaper had its origin amongst working class anarchists living in South Wales and London. Annoyed and frustrated with what they saw as the clear lack of dynamism and general irrelevance of the anarchist 'scene' in Britain at the period, they adopted a populist and highly activist approach. The emergence of this group, which developed a nominally national federal structure in 1986, sent a shock wave through the anarchist 'scene', which at that time, with rare exception, was under the influence of pacifism, moralistic exclusivist lifestyle 'politics' and/or individualism.

Class War, not surprisingly, emphasised a populist version of class struggle anarchism, promoting working class combativity, focussing on community rather than workplace struggles. Their practical activity in the first years of their existence, other than the production and distribution of the newspaper, involved headline-grabbing heckling and public harassment of various (highly deserving)left figures. After a period of inventive, but inevitably less than successful 'stunts' such as the 'Bash the Rich' events, the new federation looked more seriously at their political development.

'Their irreverent approach shook up a complacent libertarian milieu... their emphasis on an antagonistic class politics being central to libertarian revolution, helped return anarchism to its working class roots.'

This period of intense discussion culminated in the production of a book titled 'Unfinished Business: the politics of Class War' (1992) which attempted to outline a new and distinct politics that distanced itself if not from the anarchist tradition, then at least from the present anarchist milieu. Simultaneously the book, somewhat unconvincingly, embraced a libertarian take on Marxism. Although a considerable section of Class War rejected much of the Unfinished Business thesis, the book itself was at least a serious attempt to both renovate libertarian thought and to address the issue of class at the end of the 20th century. In doing so it borrowed heavily from the politics of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (see part 2 of In the Tradition) Regardless of the book, the actual Class War Federation, however, continued to be a synthesis of Platformist anarchism, autonomist Marxism, council communism and various other tendencies, all painted in populist colours. This created an ongoing tension in the organisation, which, though it contained a certain dynamic, inevitably led to an inconsistency in political line with regard to fundamentals such as the nature of the trade unions and national liberation struggles.

After a decade of trying to extricate itself from what it described as the "anarchist ghetto" the Class War Federation eventually dissolved itself after a final edition of the paper styled 'An open letter to the revolutionary movement' where they stated that "After almost 15 years of sometimes intense and frantic activity, Class War is still tiny in number and, as far as many in the organisation are concerned, going nowhere". A small rump of militants continued the organisation, which decided to describe itself as explicitly anarchist communist, though maintaining a populist and increasingly counter-cultural perspective.

But no discussion of international libertarian thought in the last 20 years can ignore the legacy of Class War. Class War, which in part at least was inspired by the experience of punk in the 1970s, breathed new life into the anarchist body-politic and brought a fresh, fiercely combative vision of revolutionary politics. This vision, which burned brightly for a short time, influenced many young working class militants, new to politics. Their irreverent approach shook up a complacent libertarian milieu. And, if nothing else, their emphasis on an antagonistic and emphatically class politics being central to libertarian revolution, helped return anarchism to its working class roots.

A different direction?

If a group like Class War distinguished itself in its emphasis on class, then other libertarian currents were developing ideas which appeared to be moving in a different direction, that of prioritising the struggle against the environmental destruction of the planet.

Although libertarians such as Peter Kropotkin, Edward Carpenter and William Morris, were amongst the first people anywhere to address issues of environment and human scale economics, much of the productivism and technophilia of capitalist ideology was shared by early socialists, anarchists included.

This failure to address the alienating and environment destroying nature of unfettered economic 'progress' was evident in the brutal industrialisation of the so-called socialist nations. The supporters of the Soviet Union and its satellites sang the praises of the latest super-dam or the newest tractor production figures. But it was reflective of the lack of environmental

awareness generally, that many of those who saw the 'existing socialist' nations for what they were, namely state capitalist dictatorships, failed to recognise the grotesque nature of the productivist ideology they reflected.

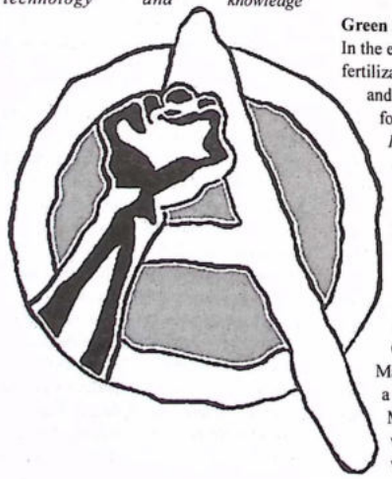
Social ecology

A revolutionary anti-capitalist understanding of green politics was slow in developing. 'Ecology' was equated with the 'conservationism' of the past which more often than not, hankered after a pre-industrial golden age and hid a reactionary agenda. It was not until the work of Murray Bookchin, and his book 'Our Synthetic Environment' (1962) that a *social* ecology would begin to emerge based upon a revolutionary humanism. This perspective was most forcefully argued in the 1982 work 'The Ecology of Freedom'.

At the centre of social ecology was the realisation that the productivist nature of capitalism was wrapped up in hierarchical social relations as much as in the need for capital to constantly expand. So this productivism and the desire to dominate the earth are contained also within socialist ideologies, particularly Marxism which also defend hierarchical social relations.

Even before the emergence of Primitivism or Deep Ecology, Bookchin realised the danger of an ecological understanding that was based upon a misanthropic, anti-humanist ideology.

"In utopia man no more returns to his ancestral immediacy with nature than anarcho-communism returns to primitive communism. Whether now or in the future, human relationships with nature are mediated by science, technology and knowledge. But whether science, technology and knowledge will improve nature to its own benefit will depend upon man's ability to improve his social condition. Either revolution will create an ecological society, with new ecotechnologies and ecocommunities, or humanity and the natural world as we know it today will perish." (Post-scarcity anarchism, 1970).



Bookchin's vision of a massively de-centralised, stateless and classless society which rationally utilises technology in order to both save the planet and to save humanity remains a minority current within mainstream green thought and organisation. On the on hand, reformist green parties and pressure groups remain entirely within the camp of a kinder, gentler capitalism, whilst on the other Primitivist and post-primitivist groups prefer to rage against civilisation itself whilst following an equally reformist trajectory.

There is much to criticise in Bookchin's arguments. His rejection of the working class as motor force of revolutionary transformation, his support for a 'libertarian municipalism' which tends to equate to electoralism etc. But his arguments on the need for a liberatory technology and an anti-hierarchical praxis have certainly influenced the Anarchist Federation and even some of his ostensible critics in the ecological resistance.

Green revolution

In the early 1990s, much of the cross fertilization between libertarian communist and green thought found organisational form in Britain with the journal *Green Revolution: a revolutionary newspaper working for ecological survival, human liberation and direct action.* Though short-lived, Green Revolution attempted an eclectic, but coherent approach, embracing "…an unbroken tradition of struggle". This tradition included the Diggers of the English Civil War, William Morris and the Marxist Rosa Luxemburg. It called for a "Green and libertarian critique of Marxism" and understood that "The war against the planet is a class war". Green Revolution was caught between, on the one hand a Green or Eco-movement increasingly influenced by Primitivism and on the other a Green-Red left which was essentially social democratic. During its short existence it did, however, try to point towards a different direction which emphasised the revolutionary potential in *social* ecology.

'Hopes were artificially high that the possibility of a new working class movement for a self-managed socialism would emerge, somehow, from the wreckage of these societies.'

The collapse of 'communism'

The end of 'existing socialism' with the death of the Soviet Union and the other state capitalist dictatorships was welcomed by libertarian communists, not least those few who lived in those countries. Hopes were artificially high that the possibility of a new working class movement for a self-managed socialism would emerge, somehow, from the wreckage of these societies. But, although a blossoming of libertarian and anti-capitalist groups, newspapers etc. was almost immediate, the reality was that, instability, ethnic conflict and massive attacks upon working class living conditions were the norm across the former 'Socialist' states as private capitalism arrived.

For the Stalinist left across the world the 'collapse of communism' created crisis and deepened schisms. But the Trotskyist left also felt the effects. The Workers States, however degenerated or deformed, were for them still examples of non-capitalist societies. Their collapse left them in an awkward situation.

For those who considered these so-called Workers States as variants of capitalist societies, however, their demise also had a strangely negative impact. Certainly we had no illusion that our God had failed, but the relentless trumpeting of the 'End of Communism' and by extension, of all collective solutions to the problems posed by capitalism, by the bourgeoisie was demoralising. "Look at what happens when you have a revolution. Dictatorship and unfreedom inevitably follows!" harped the ruling class, "Give up now!". As no wave of resistance to the new reign of free market economics seemed to be forthcoming from the working class of the former Soviet Bloc, the early nineties looked bleak.

The return of working class self-organisation

The defeat of the miners strike was an enormous blow to working class confidence. The subsequent unsuccessful struggles in British industry such as those of the print workers at Warrington and Wapping, along with the general run-down of manufacturing, left many feeling despondent. The community based struggle against the Poll Tax in the late 1980s-early 1990s, whilst inspiring, did not signal the beginnings of a new working class combativity. By 1996, the Liverpool Dockers' fight appeared like a struggle from another era. And, despite the efforts of the Dockers to internationalise the struggle and to seek new allies in the direct action oriented movements such as Reclaim the Streets, the dead hand of the Transport and General Workers Union ensured defeat.

Autonomous struggle?

In parts of Europe during the period of 1986 until the mid-nineties, new developments in the class struggle were taking place. As everywhere, working class living conditions were under attack and as everywhere, the Trade Unions were desperately trying to maintain their negotiating positions and to control any autonomous struggle.

In Italy, self-organised co-ordinations of workers began to emerge during 1985, particularly amongst teachers, railway workers and metalworkers. These co-ordinations were outside the existing unions and, where the traditional unions existed, quickly entered into conflict with them. Although different names were used in different industries and regions, the movement became known as the COBAS movement (from Committees of the Base) and used mass assemblies, recallable delegates and militant tactics to conduct their struggles. The political complexion of the movement was diverse and included various elements from the old Workers Autonomy movement of the 1970s, as well as Trotskyists, anarchists and others. Mostly its strength lay in mobilising those workers who were fed-up with the response of the established unions to attacks upon their sectors.

Although the COBAS movement was a positive example of self-organisation, it suffered from sectionalism and the desire of some of its activists to become a new trade union, a little more left and a little less bureaucratic than the traditional ones. In February 1991 the COBAS, alongside the anarcho-syndicalist union, the USI, organised a self-managed general strike against the Gulf War, which involved 200,000 people. This initiative brought more people out far more than the combined membership of the committees and USI put together.

A year later a formal organisation, the CUB (United rank and file confederation) was established, uniting workers across various sectors. This 'alternative' union is today one of several in Italy, including the UniCobas, which has an explicitly libertarian perspective. These organisations have developed their own bureaucratic practices and operate somewhere between a political group, a trade union and their original role as a tool of liaison and co-ordinated struggle.

France: echoes of 1968?

In France during the early 1990s a similar development took place as workers in the health service, transport workers, posties, workers in the car industry, the airports and elsewhere began to self-organise. They established independent Liaison Committees which attempted to co-ordinate activity in their sectors. These Committees were constantly having to out manoeuvre the various established trade unions, themselves competing for recognition and advantage. Wildcat strikes involving lorry drivers, nurses and care workers, brought thousands of self-organised workers out. When these struggles died down, some following more success than others, the independent Committees tended not to establish themselves, as in Italy, as permanent structures. Many of those involved in these strikes in 1990-1992 were subsequently involved in the mass strike wave of the Hot Autumn of 1995. Public sector workers responded to proposed attacks upon social security, pensions and the public budget with a series of strikes, mass demonstrations and occupations. With echoes of 1968 (see In The Tradition part 3), at times this took on an almost insurrectional character with pitched battles between coal miners and police, the occupation of public buildings and barricades rising in towns and cities across the country. Eventually, with union help, the most active groups of workers, such as the rail workers, were isolated and the struggles petered out.

What such events point to is that even in a period where the ruling class seems to have extinguished the spirit of revolt and any vision of a better world, the basic contradictions of capitalism create resistance. Likewise, the stranglehold of bureaucrats and officials is challenged by the innate creativity of the mass of working people, time and time again.

'In February 1991 the COBAS, alongside the anarcho-syndicalist union, USI, organised a self-managed general strike against the Gulf War, which involved 200,000 people.'

In the tradition?

The In the Tradition series has attempted to draw the very briefest outline of the ideas, people and events that have influenced the development of the modern libertarian communist movement. Most of the events have allowed us insights into how people attempt to practically solve the problems of organisation and struggle. Many have been inspirational and we have learned most from the activity of (extra)ordinary people trying to understand and change their world.

The Anarchist Federation accepts no guru, no theoretical God or master. We think no libertarian group or individual should. But we reject anti-intellectualism and ahistorical approaches, both of which are far too common amongst anarchists. Neither do we favour an eclecticism that simply borrows from here and there without critical appreciation. We hope that readers will seek out for themselves the thinkers, groups and movements that we have talked about. We hope that readers will take the time to contact us, demanding to know why we haven't covered x, y and z! So many important events and theories haven't made it into the parts, perhaps we should have started work on a book several years ago!

But, in a period such as our own, when libertarian revolutionary movements are growing in areas where they had never existed until the last 20 years, then the need for an engagement with *where we have been* is central to any understanding of *where we are going in the future.* We hope that In the Tradition has made a small contribution to making that engagement possible.

who's afraid of nanotechnology?

The strength of opposition to GM crops in Britain and elsewhere in the world has shocked the scientific establishment, biotech companies and government bodies to the core.

Now environmental and political concerns are being voiced worldwide about 'nanotechnology', namely the coming together of technologies at increasingly small scales that promises to give humankind unprecedented control over the matter and organisms that make up our world. Development of the ideas and tools to realise nanotech is already being vigorously funded by government and private bodies alike, to the tune of billions of pounds. But it has become clear that some of these same interests are now perceiving a need for 'public engagement' at this relatively early stage of development (at least in terms of consumer products), so much so that in June 2003 Lord Sainsbury commissioned the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering to conduct a study (now completed) of likely developments and implications for ethics, health and society.

So what's all the fuss about?

Our world is made of atoms and molecules so what better to manipulate its behaviour at the finest level? But until relatively recently, the story goes, we've only really been able to deal with matter in bulk - mixing and separating chemicals to make new substances has been the mainstay of much of our science since the Iron Age, only supplemented in the last century by our ability to manipulate nuclear matter. Over the last 30 years, however, it's become possible to manufacture ever more complex computer chips and to manipulate the DNA molecules that make up the insides of cells -

An ant carries a 1mm² microchip

Eric Drexler - Engines of Creation

achievements that have fuelled the economies of the developed world in the hands of the powerful and rich electronics and biotech industries.

The GM debate, especially over crops and food, has helped heighten awareness of this power over consumers and producers alike - a 'debate' that been forced on industries whether by media-amplified consumer unease or by destruction of test sites and seed trials, or by governments responding to those reactions.

Nanotech takes another step towards creation and techniques for manipulation of smaller devices and finer materials, some of which already exist, and this new power raises new safety and ethical concerns. One perhaps obvious safety concern is that very small size particles can interact with living organisms, indeed are being designed to do so for many applications. This might be a good thing - a new way of supplying life-saving drugs for example, or a very bad thing - if particles or fibres at scales similar to smoke, soot or asbestos lodge in our lungs, or enter and affect cells in detrimental ways. A related issue is that some materials that are not listed as dangerous at larger scales (and so do not currently come under regulatory controls) could become so at smaller scales. One current concern is material used in sunscreen - watch out for 'micro/nano' in cosmetics ads designed to prepare us for more of these. Not only this but the technologies of bioscience, computing and chemistry are converging so that concepts of organisms, machines and environment are getting mixed up. Intelligent chips that inhabit cells or control tissue growth and paint-on arrays of minute lights (or cameras) are just two examples of near-future applications. Insects whose nervous systems are electronically controlled, and self-replicating mini-robots (nanobots) that work in groups to manipulate materials, are being mooted as further-in-the-future capabilities. The latter raises the nightmares of these tiny robots getting out of control in the environment, or the designing of biological or chemical weapons with the very intention of destroying materials or life from the inside. The terms grey-goo and green-goo have been coined to help picture these kinds of scenarios, with some media exposure. [If you've come across this in the press already you might be concerned that Prince Charles came up with the grey-goo problem! Don't worry about siding with the Royals on this, as it actually originated with Eric Drexler of the Foresight Institute, an intellectual originator of the ideas and implications of nanotechnology in his book 'Engines of Creation'].

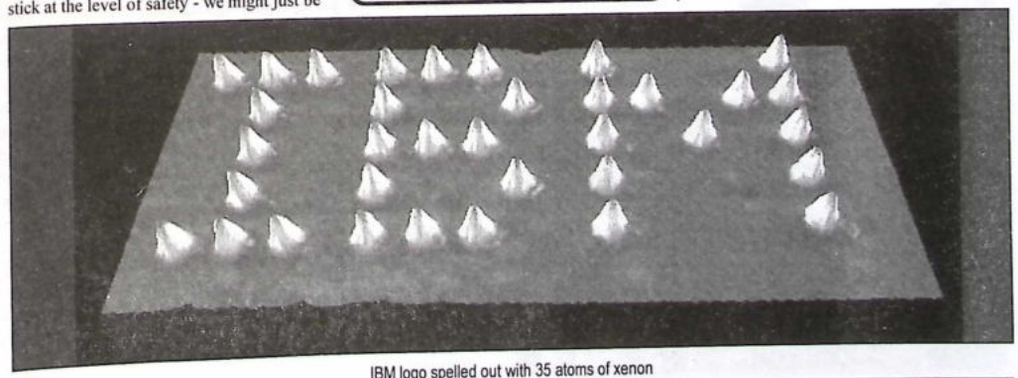
So, why are governments and companies so worried about public opinion these days? Well, not surprisingly much of this comes down to money. Biotechnology has now been shown to be a big earner, and investment in nanotechnology is likewise expected to produce massive profits over the few next decades. Much of the hype and huge funding to promote nanotech is fuelled by the expectation that getting global patents now will ensure that the spoils of the hoped for 'killer applications' of the future will go to the early investors - predominately in the rich developed nations of course - and ensure the continued strength of the biggest economies. Another driver for the so-called democracies has been created by fostering the need to develop the technology before the bad-guys do - a good way to help secure funding from paranoid governments intend on military domination. But in spite of the scaremongering, the real fear is that popular resistance to GM will translate to nanotech and have an effect on investment, funding and future profits (often called 'stifling innovation'). As well as the potential for consumer refusal and scaring off venture capitalists there is also a worry by companies of 'over-regulation' resulting from politicians responding to public opinion, whether the kind in the EU and elsewhere to limit exposure and import of GM materials, or the anti-abortionist led legislation against embryonic stem-cell research from the US and Costa Rica.

Some scientists are still saying don't worry 'it's all just chemistry' and talk of custom-designing more environmentally friendly materials or even making them to destroy pollutants, but considering a greater awareness of chemical and pharmaceutical disasters in history, just accusing ordinary people of being Luddites is no longer washing. On the other hand, some proponents of nanotech are now attempting to distance themselves from the more futuristic ponderings of enthusiasts like Drexler - frustrated by the fears he has created - and are calling to prioritise funding on less speculative research (at least for now). But what of the other components of nanotechnology? Minute sensors could have a great impact on our freedom. There's already a proliferation of cameras and soon we'll have ID tags on every product. The smaller these become, the more pervasive and hidden these will be. And who might own the 'bionic' insect you were trying to swat? There is virtually no real awareness about these aspects whilst the technology is being rapidly developed.

So, here we go again with a massive campaign against nanotech - or do we? Does this even require special notice by revolutionaries? Well perhaps not if we only stick at the level of safety - we might just be siding with calls for more state regulation! Even direct action can just end up with a statist solution if governments just respond to public outcry, however empowering it may feel at the time. That's fine if we just want protecting against risks to our safety and that of the environment, but it doesn't get us very far in creating a climate of questioning the vested interests of those who really stand to benefit from the applications of new technologies. Anarchists, who criticise both state and capitalism, have a lot to offer in this respect. Interestingly, Demos, a policy influencing think-tank in the UK, has started to worry that if our democracies don't engage us citizens at the societal and ethical levels (as they didn't do about GM) that we'll never accept any new technologies or controversial policies (whether NHS reform or war with Iraq) again, especially considering that we already mistrust multinational companies. That may be the case, but the fact they are saying this at all is perhaps the best indication that anti-GM protest and direct action has shifted the terrain - it's not just about nut and bolts and what they are being used for, but about who wants to own them, and why.

further information

ETC Group: The Big Down, http://www.etcgroup.org
Greenpeace: Future technologies, today's choices, http://www.greenpeace.org.uk
RS/RAE joint study, http://www.nanotec.org.uk
Institute of Nanotechnology, http://www.nano.org.uk
Foresight Institute, http://www.foresight.org
Center for Responsible Nanotechnology, http://crnano.org
Demos: See-through Science, http://www.demos.co.uk



IBM logo spelled out with 35 atoms of xenon

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these:

SchNEWS - Direct action news sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX

Direct Action - Anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation. £2.00 issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW

Freedom: Anarchist Fortnightly - Under new management! Now more anarchist-communist influenced and worth a read. From Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. Send a pound for an issue.

Earth First! Action Update - Monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12 issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich, NR2 3AL

Collective Action Notes - Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists - Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St-Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them from our website (www.afed.org.uk).

the resistance in Iraq

The United States and its allies have become bogged down in Iraq. The "mission accomplished" boasts of Bush now seem extremely hollow.

The numbers of fatalities incurred by the US military are well over a thousand and they have lost control in some areas. In fact some areas are no-go. The American policy of capturing the Iraqi oilfields and just as importantly, their hopes of controlling the whole of oil-rich Central Asia from their conquest of Iraq and Afghanistan have gone terribly wrong. Saddam was overthrown, but instead of strengthening the US grip on the world, the forces of Islamic fundamentalism have been seriously strengthened. Saddam, previously a useful client of the West, kept both working class revolution AND fundamentalism under control in his secular State. Now Iraq might disintegrate into several different pieces.

The coalition that the US cobbled together in the wake of the September 11th attacks and the start of the "war on terror" are also showing signs of great strain. There are large anti-war movements throughout the world and anti-war sentiment has resulted in the withdrawal of Spain from the occupation. Support for the occupation is increasingly shaky in other countries, with nervous governments worried that they might be voted out on a wave of anti-war sentiment.

The armed resistance against occupation is made up of two main currents- the Baathist party of Saddam, and different Islamic fundamentalist factions. Part of the Baathist forces are made up of Saddam's elite Republican Guard, which was his main arm of repression inside Iraq and on whose loyalty Saddam and his family could count. (about 25,000 men and women) Another section of the Saddamist resistance is made up of the Fedayeen Saddam. This formation was set up by Saddam's son Uday, as a counterweight to his brother Qusay, who controlled the Republican Guard. It is trained in urban combat and undercover work.

Saddam's regime lasted 40 years and in true totalitarian fashion, it planted itself deeply in every aspect of Iraqi society. That is why, despite the capture of Saddam and the death of his sons, it is proving difficult to uproot. A whole social layer, the bureaucracy and the higher ranks of the military are totally identified with Saddam For them to retain or claw back their privileges, and there were many, they must either return to power through armed struggle or integrate themselves into the new regime set up by the US.

Originally the US planned on deBaathisation of Iraq. A number of workers strikes broke out in summer 2000 calling for wage rises and violently opposing themselves to the corrupt Baathist factory directors. The urgent need to put the Iraqi economy back on a firm footing meant this was soon forgotten and a number of Baathist officials, bureaucrats and military leaders have been put back in the saddle, headed up by Alawai, dissident Baathist and loyal accomplice of the CIA.

Splinter

The splintering of the Baathists, with some rallying to the new regime and their failure to mount an effective armed resistance, meant the emergence of political Islam as a dominant trend within the resistance.

The Baathists reinforced religious identities with their persecution of the Shiite Moslems and the expulsion of one of the oldest Jewish communities. Ethnic and religious identities were strengthened, whilst dying institutions were reinforced. The Baathists gave a role to tribal leaders, which caused derision in a population that is 70% urban and considers them as archaic. The chaos in Iraq is now in fact unleashing a process of retribalisation. The Americans have entered into this with their exploitation of tribal relations and which sheikhs could be supported.

Combatants

Many of the Moslem combatants fighting in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia are young people from countries who are glad to see them go off to fight. For example Saudi Arabia is happy to finance Islamism internationally in order to fight it internally. The exodus of many young Islamist militants means less of a threat at home. Those Jordanians, Saudis, Palestinians, Syrians who came to support Iraq against the Allies were stranded there and had no alternative but to carry on armed struggle. These fighters have brought the most intransigent forms of Islam with them like Wahhabism and Salafism. The similarity between the communiqués of the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria and the Islamic Army in Iraq are not a coincidence. The Islamist internationalists are a minority in Iraq but their fanaticism and their networks and their training represent a force to be reckoned with.

Abu Rashid, Wahhabist militant and ex-member of the Saddam guard, is now one of the "emirs" of Fallujah. The Taliban is represented by the Army of the Companions of the Prophet, who declared jihad on the feminist leader Yannar Mohammed because of her opposition to the sharia. And of course there is the organisation led by the Jordanian Abu Moussab Zarkaoui, the notorious beheader, who has pledged allegiance to Osama bin-Laden.

Al-Qaeda is hostile to all the Arab nationalisms and Arab "socialisms" and wants to create a vast Moslem Umma (community) founded on sharia law and the most advanced capitalism. It is a pure product of capitalist globalisation and it is not for nothing that bin-Laden, a Saudi millionaire, heads this movement.

Whilst the Baathists can only rely on vast stockpiles of arms, the Islamists can count on the backing of the financial networks of Islamism. The Saudi monarchy has not the slightest intention of letting Iraq return to a leading role in petrol production. Iran for its part is financing the Shiite section of the resistance.

Some Islamists have done like the Baathists, integrating themselves into the provisional government, like the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution, whose several thousand militia are now in the new regular army in Iraq.

Even Moqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Shiite resistance, is ready to turn his Mahdi Army into a political party and participate in the 2005 elections.

ALL the Islamist groups, despite their differences have the same aims, to establish a regime founded on Islam and sharia law, with strict sexual apartheid. They hate atheists and secularists, other religious groups, feminists, organised workers, socialists and communists and they devote columns to denouncing them in their papers. The poet Mohammed Abdul Rahim, who recently joined the Worker-Communist Party and openly campaigned against political Islam in the town of Kut, was murdered, probably by troops of the Islamic Council of the Islamic Revolution, which is part of the new provisional government.

In Sadr City, the stronghold of al-Sadr, the local population have supported his Mahdi Army. But in Nassiriyah, the workers of the aluminium factory saw off his troops, which had attempted to occupy and turn it into a military base. In Basra, the different Islamist parties have set up an "emirate" where women are no longer seen in the street and where alcohol and nightclubs and even picnics are forbidden. In Mosul, women working in hospitals or universities have been shot and beheaded.

One could argue that there must be more to the resistance than the Baathists or the Islamists. If it does exist, it has not made itself known. The Iraqi Communist Party has participated in the new government, giving it a certain legitimacy within the working class, and has played an important role in the reorganisation of industry, controlling a powerful trade union central, the Iraqi Federation of Unions. This has not always been appreciated by ordinary members of unions. This has resulted in a split called the Communist Party (Cadres) who have joined the armed resistance. Whilst it might criticise the religious leaders, it makes common front with the Islamists and Baathists in the name of patriotism!!

Mobsters and mullahs

A section of the Communist Party has lost some of its members to the Worker-Communist Party whose opposition to both the occupation and Islamism has attracted an increasing number. This party does not participate in the resistance and criticises it for its nationalist and religious character. It organises in the areas where it has strength- principally refugee camps and squatted buildings- armed groups to protect the population from Islamism and gangsterism. One of its leaders has declared that its aim is to arm the masses and their organisations, to kick out the occupation troops, diminish Islamist influence and to develop the power of the masses. However, they remain trapped within Leninist ideology, and it remains to be seen whether such a mindset will effect their practice as regards real autonomy for the working class.

Why is the resistance overwhelmingly on the right and extreme right, with sections of the left pulled into its orbit and with admiration from a section of the extreme left?

Many were favourable to autonomy for the Kurds, they were weary from the years of war, embargoes and sanctions. The appalling behaviour of the occupation armies and the rise in unemployment has now turned this weariness into hostility. Some of the poorest sections of the masses have been drawn into the struggle against the occupiers. The Islamists, with their well-funded networks have benefited from this.

The workers movement and the women's movement in Iraq does not have large resources. They can only count on themselves, and international solidarity, to develop their workers councils and neighbourhood councils. The resistance only offers an ultrareactionary Islamic regime.

WHAT GOES IN ORGANISE!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

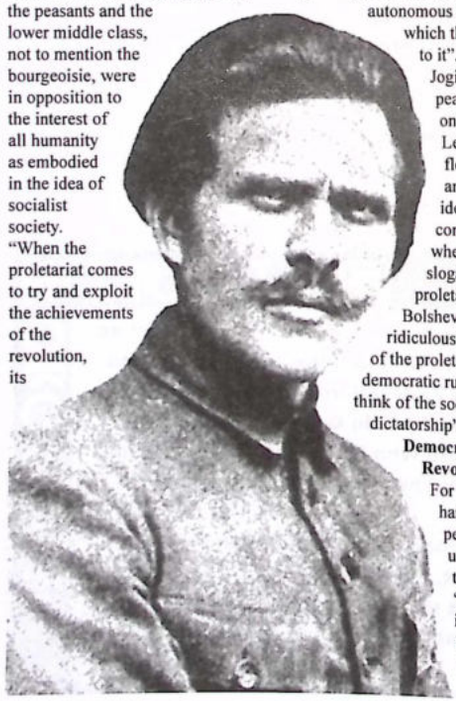
the third revolution?

Peasant resistance to the Bolshevik government

"All those who really take the social revolution to heart must deplore that fatal separation that exists between the proletariat of the towns and the countryside. All their efforts must be directed to destroying it, because we must all be conscious of this- that as much as the workers of the land, the peasants, have not given a hand to the workers of the town, for a common revolutionary action, all the revolutionary efforts of the towns will be condemned to inevitable fiascos. The whole revolutionary question is there; it must be resolved, or else perish". Bakunin, from The Complete Works-"On German PanGermanism".

During the Civil War in Russia, Lenin's government was faced with a number of predominantly peasant uprisings which threatened to topple the regime. Can the accusation be justified that these were led by kulaks (rich peasants), backed by White reaction, with the support of the poorer peasants, unconscious of their real class interests? Or was it, as some opponents of Bolshevism to its left claimed, the start of the 'Third Revolution'?

Orthodox Marxism discounted the revolutionary role of the peasantry.
According to the German Marxist Karl Kautsky, the small peasant was doomed. It was tactically useful to mobilise the peasant masses. In his the Agrarian Question, he stated that the short-term objectives of the peasants and the lower middle class, not to mention the bourgeoisie, were in opposition to the interest of all humanity as embodied in the idea of socialist society. "When the proletariat comes to try and exploit the achievements of the revolution, its allies-the peasantry- will certainly turn against it…the political make-up of the peasantry disbars it from any active or independent role and prevents it from achieving its own class representation…By nature it is bourgeois and showds its reactionary essence clearly in certain fields… That is why the proposition before the congress speaks of the dictatorship of the proletariat alone supported by the peasantry… Peasantry must assist proletariat, not the proletariat the peasantry in the achievement of the latter's wishes". Leo Jogiches, " The dictatorship of the proletariat *supported* by the peasantry"at the Sixth Party Congress of the Polish Social Democrats 1908. (and the following discussion at the Congress where it was stated that the "peasantry cannot play the autonomous role alongside the proletariat which the Bolsheviks have ascribed to it". Rosa Luxemburg shared Jogiches' mistrust of the peasantry, and could seethem only as a reactionary force. Lenin himself, extremely flexible on a tactical level, and extremely rigid on an ideological level, was conscious of what he was doing when his Party advanced the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. After Bolshevik triumph "then it would be ridiculous to speak of the unity of will of the proletariat and of the peasantry, of democratic rule…Then we shall have to think of the socialist, of the proletarian dictatorship"(**Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution,** 1905).



For his part Trotsky had a harsher attitude to the peasantry, and was unconvinced of even a temporary alliance with them: "The proletariat will come into conflict not only with the bourgeois groups which supported the proletariat during the first stage of the revolutionary struggle, but also with the broad masses of the peasants (**1905**,written in 1922).
The Bolsheviks defined 'kulaks' as rich peasants, able to sell produce on the market as well as produce for their own use, able to employ hired labour and to sell their surplus products. They were seen as representing the real petit bourgeois elements in the countryside, ready to develop agriculture through capitalist advances. In the second stage of the revolution, after the initial bourgeois stage, the kulaks (and a 'substantial part of the middle peasantry'- Lenin) would go over to the bourgeoisie, whilst the proletariat would rally the poor peasantry to it. But as Ferro points out: " The search for the kulak was partly false, a matter of chasing shadows, for the kulaks had often disappeared, or sunk to muzhik level, since the Revolution of October" (1). What is certain is that on a practical level the Bolsheviks alienated vast masses of the peasantry in the 'War Communism' years from 1918 to 1921, in particular with grain requisitioning and the Chekist repression. The Bolsheviks sought to bring class war to the peasantry. In doing so they exaggerated the importance and wealth of the kulaks. Selunskaia reports that in fact only 2 per cent could be classified as 'clearly kulaks' (2). One official statistic gives the following figures: in 1917, 71% of the peasants cultivated less than 4 hectares, 25% had between 4 and 10 hectares, only 3.7% had more than 10 hectares, these categories changing respectively in 1920 to 85, 15, and 0.5%. Another criterion, the possession of a horse, according to the same statistics, can be used to show relative wealth.29% had none, 49% had one, 17% had two, and 4.8% had more than 3 (in 1917). By 1920, the figures had changed respectively to 27.6, 63.6, 7.9, and 0.9%. (3)
In fact, the number of kulaks- and here we are referring to Bolshevik norms as to what constituted 'wealthy'- was diminishing, and the equalisation process was continuing. As for the requisitioning, the leading Bolshevik Kubanin admitted that half the food collected rotted, and many cattle died on railway carriages en route, due to lack of water and food (4).

War communism
In reaction to war communism, a number of insurrections broke out. In the West Ukraine, the Makhnovist movement, inspired and militarily led by the anarchist peasant Nestor Makhno, was one of the more ideologically developed movements. It must be remembered that the Makhnovists had controlled this part of the Ukraine before the arrival of the Red Army and had successively defeated Austro-German and White troops. The Makhnovists invited a number of anarchists fleeing from the North and Bolshevik persecution or returning from foreign exile, to work through the Nabat (Alarm) Confederation of Anarchists in propaganda, cultural and educational work among the peasantry. The Makhnovists saw the White threat as a greater danger than the Bolsheviks, and concluded a series of alliances with the latter in a united front against the White leaders, Denikin and Wrangel. In fact, there seems to be much evidence that Wrangel would have smashed through the Ukraine and taken Moscow and destroyed the Bolshevik government, if not for the efforts of the Makhnovists. At the end of a joint campaign against the Whites in the Crimea, Makhnovist commanders were invited to Red Army headquarters and summarily shot. Makhno himself fought on for several months, before being forced to retire over the border (5).
The Cheka and the prodrazverstksa (food requisition squads) never showed themselves in the Makhnovist centre of Hulyai-Polye before 1919, but peasants living in the Ekaterinoslav and Alexandrovsk areas had plenty of experience of them. In other areas of insurrection the initial opposition was more directly a result of the 'War Communism' policies of Bolshevism.
In West Siberia, (and indeed throughout the whole of Siberia - see Organise! 62 and the article A Siberian Makhnovschina?) The regime was faced with probably their worst threat, and it is possible that it was this, more than the Kronstadt insurrection of the same year, that forced it to change course. **Krasnaya Armiya** (Red Army, published by the Military Academy, and aimed at a small circle of Communist readers) had to admit in its edition of December 1921 that the carrying out of the grain collections in spring 1920 roused the Siberian peasantry against the Communists and that "the movement in the Ishimsk region was proceeding under the same slogans which at one time were put forth by the Kronstadt sailors". Red Army had to admit that ineptitude, economic mismanagement, and 'criminal' seizure of property had been amongst the causes of peasant dissatisfaction. The journal recognised the effect on the morale when they saw at first hand the food requisitioned from them rotting in carloads. 'Provocatory acts' by government representatives in the tax-gathering agencies had frequently brought about risings of entire villages. The journal also reported on 'a very unique' movement in the Don and Kuban regions, headed by Maslakov, an ex-Commander of the Red Army, with the aim of declaring war on " the saboteurs of the Soviet power, on the 'commissar-minded' Communists". (6) In fact, this was a whole brigade of the Red Army.

Links
Indeed Maslakov's uprising in February 1921 in eastern Ukraine quickly linked with the Makhnovists through the detachment of the Makhnovist commander Brova. Other

Bolshevik, General Mikhail Tukhachevski, who put down peasant uprisings

Red Army Commanders revolted, as with the battalion at Mikhailovka led by Vakulin, and then Popov, in the Northern Don Cossack territory.(from December 1920) Vakulin appears to have had a force of 3,200, six times the amount he had started out with, when he moved east into the Ural region. He succeeded in taking prisoner a Red Army force of 800.But on 17th February 1921 he lost a battle in which he died, and the Don Cossack F.Popov, a Social Revolutionary, took over. The Popov group moved back into Samara and then Saratov provinces, picking up strength as it went along. It was estimated by the Red Army that it numbered 6,000 by now. It managed to capture an entire Red Army battalion. It appears to have been eventually crushed, if we believe Bolshevik sources. In Samara a Left-Social Revolutionary officer, Sapozhkov, in the Red Army revolted at the head of 'anarchistic and SR elements' (according to the Soviet historian Trifonov). He was himself the son of a peasant in this province. This uprising began on 14th or 15th July 1920 with a force of 2700. Sapozhkov fell in battle on 6th September after 2 months of fighting. His place was taken by Serov, who was still able to gather 3,000 combatants and who fought on until summer of 1923, the longest time than any rebel band had fought on, apart from Makhno.
In the Tambov region another serious insurrection began in August 1920 under the guidance of Alexander Stepanovitch Antonov. Here again the revolt was sparked off by grain requisition. Antonov himself was an ex-Social Revolutionary, who spoke of defending both workers and peasants against Bolsheviks. Other leading lights in this movement included, Socialist Revolutionaries, Left Socialist Revolutionaries and Anarchists. The Antonovists were able to assemble 21,000 combatants at one time. The Anarchist Yaryzhka commanded a detachment of the Antonovist movement under the black flag of anarchism. Whilst serving in the Army during World War I, he had struck an officer in 1916,was imprisoned, and had converted to anarchism as a result of his experiences. He began operations in autumn 1918, fighting on till killed in action by the Bolsheviks in autumn 1920.
It can be seen that all these risings or oppositional movements to Leninism amongst the peasantry occurred around about the same time, over the period 1920-1921. Indeed, taken with the rising of the sailors at Kronstadt in 1921, they formed in toto a grave threat to Bolshevik rule. The aims of the Kronstadt insurgents seem to have had an echo in the peasant movements. This is hardly surprising considering many Kronstadt sailors had peasant origins. The west Siberia uprising adopted the Kronstadt demands, as noted by Krasnaya Armiya. After the Tambov insurrection, the Soviet authorities found the Kronstadt resolutions at an important Antonovist hiding place. Antonov himself was so saddened by the news of the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising that he went on a vodka binge, so it is alleged. It appears that some Kronstadt sailors escaped the crushing of the insurrection and linking up with the Antonovschina. On 11th July Bolshevik cavalry fought an engagement with a small but elite band of Antonovists, Socialist-Revolutionary political workers and sailors. They fought with "striking steadfastness" until the end according to the Chekist Smirnov, when the few survivors shot first their horses and then themselves. One Bolshevik noted in 1921 that " the anarchist-Makhnovists in the Ukraine reprinted the appeal of the Kronstadters, and in general did not hide their sympathy for them" (7)

Accusations
It is clear that the Kronstadters were opposed to Tsarist restoration, and had been instrumental in bringing down the Kerensky regime. The Makhnovists were equally

implacable towards the Whites. No alliance was even considered with them against the Bolsheviks, and indeed the Makhnovists formed anti-White alliances with the Bolsheviks, the last of which was to prove their downfall, as seen above. The movement was deeply influenced by anarchism, and hardly likely to countenance collaboration with one of its mortal foes. As for Maslakov, he had been a trusted Red Commander, and seems to have been fighting for a communism without commissars. Krasnaya Armiya admitted that the insurgents in the Don and Kuban regions 'disapprove of and fight against White Guardist agitation'. As for Antonov, he "undertook no embarrassing action against the Bolsheviks such as cutting communications behind the front lines, but contented himself with combating punitive detachments sent out against the peasants" (8). Antonov had been imprisoned under Tsarism for his activities as a Socialist Revolutionary during and after the 1905 Revolution with a 12 year sentence in Siberia, and his peasant movement was unlikely to have favoured a return to the old days.

Another accusation against the peasant movements was that they were kulak-led, dragging the rest of the peasantry in their wake. An analysis of leading lights within the Makhnovist movement at least disproves it in their case. Trotsky implied that the "liquidation of Makhno does not mean the end of the Makhnovschina, which has its roots in the ignorant peasant masses". But all the leading Makhnovists that we have biographical information on came from the poor peasantry, including Makhno himself, and in a few cases the middle peasantry. As Malet says: "the Bolsheviks have totally misconstrued the nature of the Makhno movement. It was not a movement of kulaks, but of a broad mass of the peasants, especially the poor and middle peasants". (9)

We have little empirical evidence for the composition of the peasant uprisings in the Don and Kuban areas. Radkey has provided some information on the Tambov insurrection through research under difficult conditions, and has found that Antonov was the son of a small-town artisan-hardly a kulak! There is evidence that some leading Antonovists were of kulak origin, (based on Bolshevik archives) yet one Cheka historian had to admit that a " considerable part of the middle peasantry" supported the insurrection (10). There is evidence that Antonov had the support of the poor peasantry and some workers in the province (11).

Reservations

One must reservations over the allegations of the 'kulak character' of these uprisings. Even if it is admitted that some kulaks took parting the risings, it must be granted, from the little evidence available, that other sections of the peasantry took an active part. What can be made of the allegations that far from being counter-revolutionary, the peasant uprisings were the start of a 'Third Revolution' (leading on from the February and October Revolutions). This term appears to have been developed by Anarchists within the Makhnovist movement, appearing in a declaration of a Makhnovist organ, the Revolutionary Military Soviet, in October 1919. It reappeared during the Kronstadt insurrection. Anatoli Lamanov developed it in the pages of the Kronstadt Izvestia, the journal of the insurgents, of which he was an editor. Lamanov was a leader of the Union of Socialist-Revolutionary Maximalists in Kronstadt, and saw Kronstadt as the beginning of a 'Third Revolution' which would overthrow the "dictatorship of the Communist Party with its Cheka and state capitalism" and transfer all power "to freely elected Soviets" and transform the unions into " free associations of workers, peasants and labouring intelligentsia" (12). The Maximalists, a split from the Socialist-Revolutionaries, demanded immediate agrarian and urban social revolution, a Toilers Republic of federated soviets, anti-parliamentarism and distrust of parties. There is little evidence on the links between them and the Makhnovists, though it would be unlikely that this slogan emerged in two places totally independently. " Here in Kronstadt, has been laid the first stone of the Third Revolution, striking the last fetters from the labouring masses and opening a broad new road for socialist creativity", proclaimed the Kronstadters (13).

The term 'Third Revolution' however, seems vague, with no clear idea of how to bring this Revolution about. It had its adherents in Makhnovist circles, and possibly in West Siberia and with Maslakov, but never operated in a unified approach to a development of its implementation.

What distinguished the Makhnovist movement from Tambov was the former's specific ideology. The Antonov movement had no ideology, "knew what they were against….but only the haziest of notions as to how to order Russia in the hour of victory" (14). The Antonovists were a local movement with local perspectives. The Makhnovists were wide-ranging, and links were formed with Maslakov. Makhno himself campaigned as far as the Volga, going around the Don area linking up similar bands. A Makhnovist detachment under Parkhomenko was sent off to the Voronezh area in early March 1921 and it might have been attempting to link up with Antonovist detachments under Kolesnikov.

But the vast expanse of the Soviet Union curtailed link-ups between the movements. There seems to have been widespread mutual ignorance of either the existence or the aims of the differing peasant movements.

Where there was an awareness, there seems to have been little effort to combine the movements for a unified onslaught against the Bolshevik government. The Kronstadt insurrection was later deemed as several months premature by some of its leading lights (15). Localism and lack of a more global strategy similarly hamstrung Antonov and the movements in the Don, Kuban and west Siberian regions, as did the very spontaneity of the risings. The Makhnovists may have had a better grasp of the situation, but they failed to unite the opposition, going into alliance once more with the Bolsheviks, despite previous unhappy experiences. Nevertheless, the sum of these risings presented a very grave threat to the regime, forcing it to at least move from War Communism to the New Economic Policy.

Notes.

1. p.138 Ferro
2. Izmeniia 1917-20, in Atkinson.
3. L Kritsman, The Heroic Period of the Great Russian Revolution, 1926 in Skirda.
4. Kubanin 'The anti-Soviet peasant movement during the years of civil war (war communism) 1926, in Skirda.
5. Palij, Malet, Skirda all cite evidence of Makhnovist achievement in saving the Bolshevik capital
6. p.148, Maximoff
7. Lebeds, quoted by Malet.
8. p.82 Radkey
9. p122 Malet
10. Sofinov, in Radkey. p106.
11. p107-110 Radkey
12. See Getzler
13. p243 Avrich
14. p.69 Radkey
15. see Avrich

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Glossary

Kulak - a better off peasant
Muzhik - the poorer peasants
Whites - the reaction to the Russian Revolution, gathered around the Tsarists
Socialist-Revolutionaries - revolutionary party that saw a key role for the peasants and thought that Russian society could avoid capitalism and go straight to a socialist society
Left Socialist-Revolutionaries - a more radical split from the SRs.

the emerging movement

A member of the Anarchist Federation talks to a member of Organise!, the Irish anarchist organisation, to find out the state of the movement there and what prompted the merger between two of the national groups.

Perhaps you could explain the basis of the merger of the Anarchist Federation and Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation in Ireland?

The merger of the Anarchist Federation (AF) and Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation (ASF) in Ireland was based on the common desire for those organisations to look at practical ways forward for anarchism in Ireland. Theoretically and tactically, we came to believe that there was not enough difference in our mutual positions to warrant separate organisations, especially given the current size of those organisations. From working together on previous campaigns - anti-war activity, prisoner support, support for the fire fighters etc. - we already knew that there was a sufficient level of trust, confidence and mutual respect to render practical cooperation possible.

After a series of private meetings, which covered a whole range of different issues, the lack of divergence in our position on 'the national question' was confirmed. The question of workplace organisation was discussed, from time to time at later meetings, but never formally.

Did the merger start with a formal proposal or did it grow organically?

There was never a formal proposal for the AF and ASF to sit down and discuss amalgamation, though members of the AF did respond positively to the proposal made by Jason Brannigan to the movement on the 'irishanarchism' email list in 2003. For those comrades in Britain not aware of this proposal, it called for the establishment of an Irish anarchist federation based on affinity groups that "could be formed around local areas, membership of the same trade union, be employed in the same industry, or around specific issues or collectives such as prisoner support or book distribution".

This was a proposal to all three organisations existing at the time in Ireland, and to other non-aligned activists. Unfortunately, the proposal did not meet with a positive response from the Workers' Solidarity Movement (WSM) at that time; not that their response was negative, it was simply non-committal. It was just after this, however, that the ASF and AF published their first joint bulletin - Wildcat! - which focussed on class struggle relevant at the time, but also included a 'statement on the north', which we had previously agreed. It was while we were deciding the layout of the second edition of Wildcat! that we first began to realise the direction in which we were heading. It was suggested that we could compliment the statement in the first bulletin by having 'a statement on industrial organisation' in the second, and I think it was during the groundwork accomplished for that, that some of us first began to talk seriously of the possibility of merger.

Anarchist Communists and Anarcho-Syndicalists have historically differed about the way in which we create a free society. What's changed?

First of all, I think you have fallen into a common misconception regarding the use of those terms 'anarcho-communist' and 'anarcho-syndicalist'. It is fairly obvious that 'anarcho-syndicalists' are 'anarcho-communists' too. The latter is simply an umbrella term, indistinguishable from similar terms such as 'anarchist' or 'libertarian communist'

Secondly, both the AF and ASF, during our negotiation process, were aware that those events that have 'historically' divided and weakened us should not be permitted to do so over and over again.

For example, from the perspective of the AF in Ireland at the time (of which I was a member), we had long ago refused to focus on the CNT's entry into government in 1936 as an example of anarcho-syndicalist tendencies towards reformism, especially when 'historically' the FAI (good 'anarcho-communists' by the way) had also participated. We looked instead at those episodes in history that would furnish us with hope for the future: for example, the relations between the Turin Libertarian Group (essentially council communists) and the USI during the upsurge in the Italian Works Councils in 1920. Questions like: 'what were the differences in the FAUD and AAUD-E in Germany at the same time' were routinely being asked.

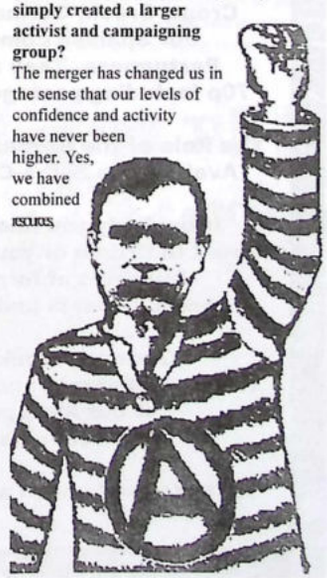
As to the accusations of a-politicism meted out to anarcho-syndicalists the world over, for anarchists, mostly based in the north of Ireland, we understood, as did the ASF, that being apolitical was the one thing neither organisation could be accused of.

From the ASF perspective, I think there was a definite sense that here was another organisation which wanted to find practical ways of working together in the here and now. When Jason, in his proposal wrote: "I do not believe, personally, that an all island Anarchist organisation/federation, or for that matter anarcho-syndicalist federation/union can be built on the basis of any of those active at present trying to achieve this on their own and in competition with each other" it seemed to echo thoughts that we had already been having in the AF.

I think our aims and principles on trade unions and industrial organisation are a great step forward in the sense that a federation of workplace and community resistance groups, alongside activity in the trade unions (if the militancy of the TU warrants it) has provided us with the opportunity to initiate in cooperation with others a series of industrial networks. The establishment of an Educational Workers Network in Ireland will hopefully be just the first step in that direction.

Has the merger changed anything or simply created a larger activist and campaigning group?

The merger has changed us in the sense that our levels of confidence and activity have never been higher. Yes, we have combined



a better bulletin, a vastly improved website, and active locals (in Belfast, Armagh and Down and in Dublin/Kildare). But we have an even firmer belief in the validity of our ideas, and the willingness to argue them. At the same time, we are modest enough to realise, that the growth of anarchism in Ireland will be a combined effort of all those willing to participate in class struggle both in the workplace and our communities.

What are the main political priorities of the new group and what are the main challenges facing the working class in Ireland?
The main political priorities really lie in helping develop greater coordination, solidarity and mutual aid, which will culminate in the social, political and economic transformation of our society. In the north of Ireland, our activists have been greatly encouraged by the reaction of ordinary people to our message in the anti-water tax campaign in which we are currently involved. The message simply is 'organise yourselves'!

We do not see the 'working class' as something external to ourselves. Organise! members are working class people and we believe that as members of that class we can reach out to the majority among us and convince them that they have the ability to empower themselves.

What has been the reaction of other anarchist and libertarian groups to the merger? Have relationships altered and if so, how?
We had a Dublin launch, which was well attended by members of the WSM and others. Everyone has been positive about our merger. If relations have altered, they have altered for the better. Having a stronger anarchist organisation in Ireland can only be beneficial to the movement overall.

One of the key reasons for merger appears to have been to increase the profile of anarchism in the workplace. How's that going?
Organise! has members who are shop-stewards in trade unions but, where the potential exists, it is through our vision of 'open' industrial networks that we believe there is a real possibility that the profile of anarchism in our workplaces will grow in the next few years. But not just the workplace, organisation must link up with community-based struggle as well.

What campaigns are Organise! involved in at the moment?
Our ongoing campaigns are anti-racism, anti-water charges activity and prisoner support.
Our members are involved in the Fascists Out Campaign (FOC), which has taken direct action against the rise of the White Nazi Party (WNP). We believe this is the only argument those thugs understand.
In the north, the onset of water charges in 2006 has been met by our locals there actively going out and engaging with people in our communities, winning the argument for a massive campaign of non-payment based on direct action.
Through our links with Anarchist Prisoner Support (APS), we remain constant in our desire to build up networks of support for all our prisoners.
Recently, our members were involved in direct action against the use of Shannon airport by U.S. military aircraft and against the use of so-called 'less lethal weapons' by armed forces throughout the world.

What's your view of the state of libertarian politics in Ireland and the culture of resistance to the state?
I think libertarian politics are in a healthy state at the moment in Ireland. Grassroots networks have appeared in several cities in Ireland as a result of the prevalence of libertarian ideas and disillusionment with Marxist-Leninism. The Grassroots Gatherings of anarchists and libertarians in Ireland is ongoing, and while they are a useful source of networking with others, I believe, personally, that they ought to focus on more class-based issues in the future.

Are any other mergers or co-operations planned? What about the Workers Solidarity Movement?
We have no mergers planned with the WSM. We have just published our response to their position on partition and we would hope this would be seen as a valid attempt to work through some of our differences there. Regarding our positions on trade unions, there is possibly greater opportunity for rapprochement around the strategy of industrial networks.
As far the future we have a pamphlet on 'the national question' due out in early 2005 which will compliment the pamphlet on Belfast anarchism just released. A pamphlet on trade unions will follow later next year.

Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It: Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.
The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.
If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?
German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our Aims and Principles are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

One of the most inspirational things to come out of the protests against the Invasion of Iraq and the anti-war movement in general, was the nationwide series of spontaneous school strikes. Thousands of pupils walked out of school on their own initiative when the invasion kicked off, and their protests were amongst the most militant and confrontational in the country - far more so than the 'official' Stop The War Committees feeble *a-to-b* marches and attempts to defuse any direct action being taken at the various military bases around the country.

schools out!

If the wider anti-war movement had been infused with the same spark of genuine anger, furious indignation and immediate willingness *to act* as the school strikes then we would have been a mighty big step further down the road of building a meaningful anti-war/occupation movement - one that was serious in it's aims and methods, and that would actually carry a real social weight, instead of fumbling around making eyes at the useless (and probably mythical) 'labour left' in order to make their own personal Party gains - yet again putting their own useless sects needs ahead of those of the working class.
A *tiny* sample of the school based actions that took place on 20th March 2003 follows: A 1000 holding a demonstration inside school grounds in St Dunstan's School Glastonbury; 100 students at St Boniface School in Plymouth face suspension after a protest on the Hoe and in the city centre; 200 pupils at Helena Romanes School in Essex, staged a protest outside the school gates; Hundreds of pupils walked out from Priory, West Exeter, St Peter's school and others; 500 kids walked out of lessons from Clyst Vale school, Devon and held a protest meeting outside that went on all day; Pupils from Oathall Community College, West Sussex blocked the A272. Students at three other local schools were locked in by staff.; 200 pupils walked out of Caldew school Dalston at morning break, taking police by surprise. More than 500 ie about half the school - walked out of William Howard, Brampton, into town and held a minute's silence. Both were totally self-organised ; students at John Barrow School, Barrow were forced to climb an 8 ft fence to get out of their school after the headmaster locked them in. They occupied the town hall and handcuffed themselves to the gates; 300 12-15 year olds left 3 schools in Edinburgh and were blocked from reaching the American Consulate by police after attempting to occupy Edinburgh Castle; Students in Plymouth walked out despite staff changing break times and locking doors to attempt to stop students joining protests.; 200 11-to-16 year olds from the Caldew School in Dalston marched into the centre of the village chanting anti-war slogans.
It must be emphasised that there were many, many more protests that day - and not just in the UK, most countries experienced something similar when the invasion began.

Working class resistance
School strikes have long been a part of the working class protest in Britain, though the recent events were the first large actions scale since the early 1970s walkout by 800 students in the East End in protest at the sacking of radical teacher, and the various actions based around the Schools Action Unions and more recently in the early 1980s when pupils walked out in a number of Merseyside schools in protest at the YOP (Youth Opportunities [!] Scheme) that Thatcher was then trying to introduce that would allow local companies to use young people as near slave labour - sound familiar to all you New Dealers?
School strikes appeared almost as soon as compulsory Secondary Education was enforced against bitter resistance by many working class people who saw clearly what the state was up to in trying to eradicate working class self-education :

"For the school strike was essentially a defiant gesture of protest by working class children and their parents against the authoritarian, bureaucratic and centralised structure of schooling that increasingly wrenched control of education away from the local community and geared its organisation to the demands of a capitalist state." (1)

Prior to 1880 and the introduction of state system of compulsory schooling there was a large variety of different forms of working class self-education, specifically geared to the interests and needs of the participants - from miners schools, night schools, chartist schools, reading rooms, workers libraries, lectures, talks and walks - and "all fiercely independent of the attempted influence of the established church, philanthropists and later, of the state, they were to embody the essential belief…'that a people's education is safe only in a people's own hands" (2)

This state of affairs was very soon recognised as dangerous to the bosses - the workers could not be allowed to develop a self-identity based around their own conditions and experience and therefore needed an externally imposed 'education' that was more useful to capital. This was the thinking behind the various Elementary Acts and other school related legislation that began to appear after 1870.

In short, a situation existed in which the state was attempting to introduce it's own form of education based on the concept of teachers being: "moral police" who could 1)condition children against "crime"-curb working class reappropriation in the community; 2) destroy "the mob", working class organization based on family which was still either a productive unit or at least a viable organizational unit; 3) make habitual regular attendance and good timekeeping so necessary to children's later employment; and 4) stratify the class by grading and selection" (3) And it was from the communities conflict with and refusal of these aims that many of the school strikes sprung from as a closer look will reveal.

But first we need to examine those early strikes.

Burston school strike supporters

First struggles

These strikes were sometimes called in solidarity with their parents who were striking over their own conditions , but not always - more often they were autonomous actions, developing out of the needs and conditions of the pupils themselves, self-organised and directed towards goals that they themselves had agreed upon - the most obvious example being the almost continuous protests at the use of corporal punishment.

The first major cycle of school strikes began in 1889 in Hawick in Scotland, when pupils walked out demanding "shorter hours and no stick" - a demand that was to be found in almost all of the strikes up till the Second World War. The fact that these issues were so basic and common to most of the schools up and down the country led to the surprisingly rapid spread of the strike to other areas - reaching London, South Wales and Bristol - as news of the walk-outs reached new areas pupils spontaneously took up the struggle, recognising their shared interests with other working class children no matter where they lived. In Bethnal Green, for example 500 striking pupils organised a demonstration though the area, and marched carrying the red Flags and wearing liberty caps., Thousands of pupils were on strike nationwide at this time.

Following this, there were numerous isolated and short-term wild-cat walk-outs, generally over specific local issues until the next nationwide stoppage in 1911. Again, the key issue was the use of corporal punishment, but as the strike gathered momentum the old (but still relevant) issues concerning school hours and community control of schools rose to the surface again - a clear demonstration that the state had not yet managed to kill off working class traditions of independence and control over their own affairs.

This series of strikes was triggered by an act of brutality on a pupil by a teacher in Llanelli which led to pupils refusing to sit by and let this happen without any collective opposition - a strike was called and the pupils walked out. The next day, a Liverpool school followed suit and even elected a strike committee, followed by schools in Manchester. This led to an ever wider escalation than that of 1889 - within two weeks schools in more than 60 towns and cites were being picketed by pupils demanding longer holidays, and an end to

'The series of strikes, triggered in Llanelli, led to pupils refusing to sit by and let things happen without any collective opposition. A strike was called and the pupils walked out. The next day, a Liverpool school followed suit and even elected a strike committee. Within two weeks schools in more than 60 towns and cites were being picketed by pupils demanding longer holidays and an end to corporal punishment.'

resistance anarchist bulletin

ISSUE 77 SEPTEMBER 2005 FREE/DONATION

Guns don't kill people, coppers do!

WHAT A PUBLIC relations disaster for the police, intentionally holding down and shooting a Brazilian electrician in the head on the London tube and then making up a string of lies about what happened.

Armed police pumped bullet after bullet into the brain of Jean Charles de Menezes. He had not jumped the ticket barrier; he had not run down the escalator, he had not been wearing suspicious heavy clothing in warm weather. All of that was lies, was a cover-up. The death of de Menezes shows that "shoot to kill" is now completely sanctioned by the Blair administration. Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, said, shortly after the killing of Jean Charles that further mistakes would be made, BUT that the policy of shoot to kill would remain "in order to protect". In other words be prepared for more killings by trigger happy police who, incidentally, had already notched up other killings like that of Harry Stanley in Hackney.

Of course they'll probably get away with it because of the heightening of tension following the terrorist bombings in July. But how crazy it's got is clear from the number of armed responses all over the country. In Nottingham, for example, over the last couple of months there have been no less than three bomb scares resulting in armed police on the street, and then an armed assault on a bus. All turned out to be false alarms. Coppers with machine guns over their shoulders are becoming so common they have even been spotted doing a bit of morning shopping in a local Sainsbury's.

Anarchist communists are as horrified as everyone else about the indefensible murder of ordinary people by suicide bombers, in any country and for any cause, and struggle to change the society that drives people to accepting twisted religious dogma which justifies such actions. But it's important to remember who's got and who's dropped the biggest bombs, and, apart from the crudest of home-made devices, make and distribute most of the weapons and explosive materials they use. They are Governments of all political and religious persuasions with their armed forces and police, along with a hugely wealthy state-subsidised arms industry that is proud of its profits - especially in Britain since 'we' are one of the biggest arms producers in the world. All of the massive spending on so-called defence by governments worldwide quickly turns to offence when the time is right, whether its waging war on other countries whose borders have themselves been made up as a result of warfare between ruling classes throughout history, or keeping down popular dissent against their murderous policies.

Likewise, activities of terrorist groups work against freedom, not just by killing innocent people and making us fear each other when we could be acting together to counter the daily onslaught of life under capitalism, but by giving nation states the opportunity to tool-up and pass repressive laws, making social action much harder. ★

SHOOT TO KILL

ALONGSIDE THE SHOOT to kill policy are other threats to civil liberties with increased surveillance and the introduction of ID cards. We should not be cowed by either the Islamist or the state terrorists. We must fight to maintain the few liberties that we have.

Contacts for anti-ID cards:
Defy-ID is a national campaign fighting ID; there are many local groups who would love to hear from you-contact details on www.defy-id.co.uk
Send for a copy of the Anarchist Federation pamphlet on ID cards, Defending Anonymity to BM ANARFED, London WC1N 3XX enclosing an A4 stamped addressed envelope, or download from www.af-north.org/anon.pdf. ★

ON THE FRONTLINE - GATE GOURMET

GATE GOURMET, CATERER for airline food for British Airways deliberately provoked a walk-out to get rid of workers and maximise profits. This was part of a year long plan revealed in a clandestine document from Gate Gourmet. Workers at Heathrow Airport responded with a magnificent example of unofficial solidarity strikes. 1,000 other airport workers drawn from the same communities as the strikers supported them. For a short while, the strikers looked set to win. But this mass and uncontrolled action was too threatening to the bosses in the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). They could not deal with the idea of losing control of the situation and frustratingly for the Gate Gourmet workers, persuaded the solidarity strikers back to work. Now the striking workers look set for a long fight.

WILDCAT STRIKES

Gate Gourmet sacked 670 workers following an unofficial stoppage over the employment of 130 casual staff. They also tried to reduce the pickets to 6 but the strength of community feeling pressurised the high court judges, not normally known for their pro-worker stance, into allowing nearby demonstrations to continue. The strikes stranded up to 100,000 BA passengers, some of them for several days.

This dispute did not just happen overnight; the employers had been planning it for months. In a secret internal briefing Gate Gourmet declared the following:

✦ "Recruit, train and security check drivers. Announce intention to trade union, provoking unofficial industrial action from staff. Dismiss current workforce. Replace with new staff."

✦ A steering committee of GG managers cited the top risk as "potential for wider Heathrow based disruption". *But it would be worth the risk because of annual pension savings of up to £7 million.*

✦ Gate Gourmets new company, Versa Logistics, hires workers for lower wages and clearly exists to undercut the striking workers wages so saving the company money. The secret document tells of their plans to destabilise the work force and maximise profits. Among the threats listed were: "No redundancy packages, no leaving early, no extra pay for extra work, random drug testing, no smoking, eating or drinking in cabs."

✦ The plan also advises how to sack staff. It reads: "Immediate dismissal without legal protection. Collect ID cards, airside passes, locker keys. HR to issue dismissal letters, extra security presence. Security to escort dismissed staff from the premises."

Under the heading "Can we replace employees?" the document lists details of agencies that could recruit staff from Eastern Europe.

WHO ARE GATE GOURMET?

Texas Pacific Group owns Gate Gourmet. Its owner, Mr Bonderman has built an estimated £6 billion fortune by buying nearly bankrupt companies and turning them round. He is also chairman of Ryanair, the budget airline which doesn't offer in-flight catering.

GG made a £26 *million* loss last year and is forecast to lose £25 *million* this year. It obviously needs to save some money if Mr Bonderman is to continue his obscene profiteering.

SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKERS

As part of the plan, Gate Gourmet is recruiting cheap labour from outside the UK using specialist agencies.

The company is currently under pressure from all sides. Financially it is making huge losses. The company, which has headquarters in the States and Zurich, Switzerland, also is locked in labour disputes in the United States, where it is trying to cut $42 million a year in costs. This summer, workers successfully sued the company to have their health benefits reinstated after it said it would eliminate them. The British Government and BA need them to settle to maintain BA's position in the airline market. The budget companies are snapping at their heals.

SPREAD THE STRIKE

This is the strongest card the workers have. They must spread the strike throughout the airport. All discussions must be in the open at mass meetings, with no space for the TGWU to maintain control. This will put pressure on BA forcing it to make Gate Gourmet to take the sacked workers back. It also provides a golden opportunity for other workers at Heathrow to raise their own demands to improve their wages and conditions.

We need to support the strikers. One way is by picketing the agencies responsible for recruiting scabs and explain to those workers what is at stake for the Gate Gourmet strikers. This example of further casualisation is an attack on the humanity of workers. ★

Send messages of solidarity to media@tgwu.org.uk

ECUADOR

THE PRESIDENT OF Ecuador, Alfredo Palacios, was nearly toppled by mass actions in the country's Amazon region. Here a movement has emerged, demanding that energy firms invest more money in the communities where they have oil fields. They moved to direct action, carrying out mass blockades, dynamiting pipelines and destroying pumping equipment.

Palacios, who is looked on favourably by the US, was forced to make major concessions in late August.

The Amazon region is crippled by poverty, and the new movement was born from the realisation that millions were being made at the expense of the poor. All the energy firms promised to invest more in local development projects. Meanwhile the government tacitly agreed not to prosecute those involved in the attacks. If the firms go back on their promises, the movement states it will restart its actions. ★

THIS issue of *Resistance* has been edited and produced by members of Manchester Anarchist Federation. We can be contacted by emailing:
manchester@af-north.org
Our website is at:
www.af-north.org

BOYCOTT SHELL *Rossport, Ireland*

FOR SEVERAL YEARS a consortium consisting of Shell, Statoil, and Marathon have attempted to build an unprecedented high pressure up-stream raw gas pipeline 9 kilometres inland to a refinery in Erris, Mayo, in the north-west of Ireland.

These are high pressure pipelines, up to 345 bar pressure for the gas. The gas is untreated, that is, odourless, without the added smell for detecting leaks. This is not a normal gas pipeline. Normally gas is refined at sea, piped ashore at a much lower pressure and odorised. The biggest gas pipelines in Ireland run at 16 to 70 bar pressure.

The pipeline is to pass within 70 metres of people's houses, within 10 metres of the nearest uninhabited house, and within 20 metres of a public road. Should it be built three households will have to pass over it on their way to their front gates.

The pipeline is only one part of this development and only one part of the environmental and health and safety concerns surrounding this development. There is also pollution from the refinery into the surrounding area, including the lake which provides the regional water supply, and the waste to be pumped into Broadhaven Bay, a Special Area of Conservation under E.U. regulations which also provides livelihoods to local communities through fishing.

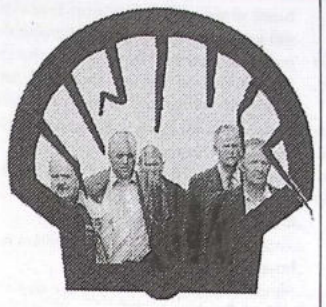
Since the middle of June mass pickets have halted all work on this development. Shell has recently announced a suspension of all work till next year.

They have been prevented from carrying out any work The final blow was a plan by 15 to 20 fishing boats to blockade the path of the ship hired to lay the off-shore pipeline.

Part of the popular effort has been Rossport Solidarity Camp, involving people from across Ireland, and from a number of European countries.

On the 29th of June five men were imprisoned indefinitely for breach of a court order stopping them from preventing Shell from accessing them and their neighbours' farm lands to construct the pipeline.

These men, known as the Rossport Five, after the hamlet in which the main body of the pipeline is to go, include not only people who are expected to live beside the pipeline, but also people who are expected to work in the fields above it everyday.



Many solidarity actions have taken place across Ireland, including simultaneous picketing of almost all the Statoil stations in Dublin. Some protests have also taken place overseas.

Shell 2 Sea, an international network formed to resist this development, is holding a major blockade of Shell's main depot in Dublin on September 10th and is calling on people across the world to join in protests on this day.

Another day of protest is 1st of October, simultaneous with a major protest rally planed for Dublin city centre. Appropriate targets include Shell, Statoil, Marathon, Irish Embassies or Consulates, and Norwegian Embassies or Consulates as Statoil is owned by the Norwegian state.

For more information see:
www.shelltosea.com
www.indymedia.ie/mayo
If you can, please write to the prisoners or donate to their legal defence fund:

Contribute to the Rossport Five Legal Defence Fund:

Account Name: The Rossport Five Fund
Bank: Ulster Bank
Address: Main Street, Belmullet, Co Mayo
Sort Code: 98-53-14
Account Number: 23987020
For International Transfers also use:
Bank ID: ULSBIE2D
IBAN: IE74 ULSB 9853 1423 9870 20

Write to prisoners Willie Corduff, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin, Vincent McGrath and Michael O'Suighin at Cloverhill Prison, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland. ★

BOYCOTT SHELL **FREE THE ROSSPORT 5**

A ROD FOR ROD'S BACK

BRITISH AIRWAYS BOSS Rod Eddington got a taste of how it sounds being next to an airport runway on August 19th at 5 am when a sound system blasting loud aircraft noises was set up outside his £2.5million country house in Berkshire.

Protesters dressed in pyjamas paid Rod a visit the same day as the BA Annual General Meeting to make him rethink plans for expansion of Heathrow and Stansted airports. It was Rod's last AGM at BA as he is about to become a Transport Adviser to the Government, and John Stewart from anti-noise group Hacan ClearSkies said, "Residents under the flight path wanted to say farewell to Rod Eddington by giving him a taste of his own medicine.

The majority of night flights using Heathrow are operated by British Airways or one of its subsidiary companies. And BA is amongst the strongest supporters of night flights."

For more info call John Stewart on 07957 385650 or see

WAVE OF STRIKES IN SOUTH AFRICA

ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND South African gold miners went out on strike in August for both pay and living conditions in the mining industry. At the same time 80,000 municipal workers also went out on strike for better pay. Police attacked demonstrations and arrested 43 workers in Durban.

Miners often work in 40°C heat up to three kilometres below ground. Whilst the big mining firms of AngloGold Ashanti, Gold Fields and South Deep make huge profits, miners are forced to live in barracks, leaving their families in townships faraway. Even though the racial zoning laws were abolished in 1991, three out of four of South African miners still live in hostels. ★

INSIDE INFORMATION

Political prisoners on hunger strike
Three of the fifteen political prisoners of Buenos Aires, who were arrested 13 months ago after a demonstration against the new "Civility Code" of the city, have started a hunger strike in demand of their freedom as well as those of their comrades. Martin Amitrano started the strike on Tuesday and was soon followed by Cesar Gerez and Marcelo Ruiz.

To demand the immediate freedom of the prisoners you can email:
Señor Presidente, Néstor Kirchner:
privada@presidencia.gov.
Señor Ministro del Interior, Aníbal Fernández:
anibalfernandez@infovia.com.
Señor Procurador General, Esteban Righi:
web@mpf.gov.ar

Support anti-G8 prisoners in Scotland
The G8 summit was held in Scotland from the 6th to the 8th July, and was protested against by a wide range of people, with demonstrations, blockades and actions. Unfortunately involved around 354 people being arrested and imprisoned, and some will face serious charges and probable prison sentences. We are calling for groups, individuals and movements to both carry out solidarity actions and to support prisoners. At the moment there is one prisoner held on remand till his court case:
John Mackie 18769, HM Prison Edinburgh, 33 Stenhouse Road, Edinburgh , EH11 3LN

Remember that all letters must have a reply address.
Almost two hundred people are due to have trials in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Stirling and Falkirk. Court cases have already started and more are due in the next few weeks.
Contact:
July 2005 Solidarity Group
c/o 17 West Montgomery Place
Edinburgh EH7 5HA
email address:
July2005solidarity@yahoo.co.uk
Also see www.g8legalsupport.info
or leave a message on 0131 557 6242 ★

SUBVERT!

When going on demonstrations stay sober, don't talk to the police and if you're arrested give only your name and address then say 'no comment' to any other questions. For more info visit: www.ldmg.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 8 Stand Up against the Arms Fair- A comedy benefit in aid of Campaign Against Arms Trades campaign against the DSEi arms fair, which will be taking place in London's Docklands the following week. Featuring Adam Bloom, Ivor Dembina, Felix Dexter, Ayesha Hazarika, Stewart Lee, Angie McEvoy and Ian Stone.
Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London. £8/5 For tickets call 020 7281 0297 or email:
kathryn@caat.org.uk

13-16 Disarm DSEi arms fair DSEi is Britains biggest weapons supermarket. This is where scumbags like BAE Systems can sell weapons to murdering tyranical regimes to wage war on their own people, it is subsidised by the government. When you next hear of some Atrocity commited in some far off country there's a pretty high chance the weapons used were made by British companies. Its time to Disarm DSEi! ExCeL Centre, London Docklands 07817 652029. Email: disarm@dsei.org Visit: www.dsei.org

14 We are all terror suspects' public meeting 7pm Sussex Arts Club, 7 Ship St., Brighton Visit: www.campacc.org.uk or www.smashedo.org.uk

OCTOBER 1 No One Is Illegal's days of action and days of outrage.
www.asylumpolicy.info/daysofoutrage.doc

NEW ANARCHIST GROUP FORMED

A NEW ANARCHIST Federation group has recently been formed in West Yorkshire. They cover the area of Bradford, Leeds and Halifax. They are active in: Bradford Anarchist Black Cross, Campaign Against Prison Slavery, 1 in 12 Club/ The Common Place, Squats, 635 Group (Antifa)

They can be contacted at:
westyorks_af@yahoo.co.uk

Organise is our twice yearly magazine. The current issue features: G8 , Casualisation, ID Cards, Women's struggle in Iraq, Water Wars.

For a FREE sample copy write to the AF at: BM ANARFED, London WC1N 3XX

ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above.

If you're interesting in joining, contact us at:
BM ANARFED, London WC1N 3XX
Email: info@afed.org.uk
Also visit: www.afed.org.uk and www.iaf-ifa.org

Subscriptions to resistance costs £4 from the address above for 12 issues. A two issue subscription to our magazine, organise! for revolutionary anarchism, is also £4.

You can subscribe to resistance by email for free via the website above.

corporal punishment amongst other things. These lightening quick strikes needed no bureaucrats or ballots to make them happen, they developed spontaneously straight out of the needs of those involved - no leaders to sell them out, or to order them back to school. Amongst the tactics used by the strikers were 'Rolling columns' and 'Flying Pickets' issued with free-passage tickets by their local strike committees, which visited other schools asking their pupils to come out and join the strike, whilst the pickets themselves were usually on duty at schools other than their own to avoid recognition.
Violence often accompanied the strikes - sometimes directed at the police who had been detailed to man the school gates to keep an eye on the pickets or sometimes the teachers who were refusing to back the walk-outs - in Birkenhead the teachers had to ask for police protection. It was reported that in the East End, pickets carried iron bars, belts and stick to stop pupils and teachers entering the schools, schools in Hull, Glasgow, Islington, Bradford, Sheffield, , Leicester and other places were had their windows smashed, and in West Hartlepool after attacking the home of their headmaster, strikers went on to loot a luxury hotel of it's booze, and Dundee was the site of a full scale riot.
A sign of how seriously the strike was being taken is given by one striker in Newport who declared "Comrades, My bleeding country calls me. The time has come. Someone must die for the cause" - or the *Educational News,* which declared *"Schoolboy strikers are simply rebels...Obedience is the first rule of school life...School strikes are therefore not merely acts of disobedience, but a reversal of the primary purpose of schools. They are on a par with a strike in the Army or Navy..."*
The strikes were eventually brought to and end by a combination of violence (brutal beatings and canings) and local authority summonses for truancy being served on pupils mothers - but they did clearly demonstrate, both to pupils and the state that school strikes, if linked and mutually supported had a power that could seriously worry authority - indeed the *Educational News* went on to ask whether these walk-outs would have any longer-term repercussions amongst the next generation of workers, considering they had been blooded in open class war at such an early age.

Class Tactics
It is notable that there were major industrial conflicts in both 1889 and 1911, which has lead some commentators to dismiss the waves of school strikes as mere copy-cats or pale imitations of the actions of the pupils parents.
For instance there was serious conflict in Llanelli in the Rail and Coal industries in 1911 which led to 600 troops being sent in (by Winston Churchill, at that time the Liberal Home Secretary) to militarily occupy the area , which lead to the shooting of two local men, prior to the school strike.

'Violence often accompanied the strikes, sometimes directed at the police who had been detailed to man the school gates to keep an eye on the pickets. It was reported that in the East End pickets carried iron bars, belts and sticks to stop pupils and teachers entering the schools. In West Hartlepool after attacking the home of their headmaster, strikers went on to loot a luxury hotel of it's booze.'

However, Stephen Humphries in *Hooligans or Rebels* has convincingly argued that what this actually demonstrates is the transmission of the tactics of collective class conflict adopted by the parents to the next generation of workers, who quickly picked up the lesson of striking whilst the state was at it weakest and most stretched - as it was in this case. What this signified was not, in fact, a meaningless 'prank' but a serious grounding in class struggle, passed from one generation to the next, and reaching fruition in the General Strike of 1926, which undoubtedly would have saw participation by those original Llanelli strikers. This can be seen in the methods chosen by the school strikers - pickets, mass demonstrations and marches - classic tools of the labour movement utilised in defence of traditional working class concerns.
It would be interesting to ask some of the current crop of strikers how far they were influenced by the sharp increase in industrial disputes in the last few years (Fire-fighters, Transport workers, Heathrow staff etc) especially those of a wildcat nature - if they were influenced by them at all, that is. I'm not suggesting that there will be another General Strike in a decades time, merely that it would be useful to know how aware or tied to the 'normal' form of strike the current examples are given all that has changed in Industrial Relations and the concerted attempts to atomise the working class, and the determined attempt to argue that the 'working class' longer exists anymore over the last 30 years or so. Have those struggles and their inter-connections with the anti-war movement, and oppositional culture in general being picked up by the school strikers, have those struggles circulated to those areas? (Though it must be rather gleefully pointed out that the leftists failed miserably during the strikes in their attempts to introduce the youthful protestors to the joys of Trotsky!)
It might also be useful to ask if, given contemporary social conditions, are the current record high levels of (recorded) truancy a form of a 'hidden' school strike, in the same manner as sabotage, absenteeism and other covert forms of workplace struggle are 'hidden' strikes? Can this be seen in the same way as the 'Refusal of Work' was seen as a refusal of (or retreat from) the imposition of capitalist social relations in the 1970s and 80s?

Enclosures?
Aside from these nationwide outbreaks of strikes, there have been literally hundreds of other walkouts in hundreds of towns, over a huge range of issues, from the sacking of a favourite teacher, to attempts to move pupils to another school, to Local Authorities trying to remove schools from community control and into their own hands.
In fact, it would be possible to view that history of struggles around these recurrent outbreaks of wildcat school strikes in terms of state (local or national) encroachment upon traditional working class entitlements or traditions - an *enclosure* in the social space of communal education in the same manner as the capitalist enclosures that historically (and currently in many parts of the world) sought to extend capitalist commodity relations to common land or woods in order to destroy the independence and ability to self-provision of the working class, thus forcing them into the cities and wage-labour, but in this case forcing people into the education that capital demands for its continued reproduction - to try and

Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Issue 19: The poll tax rebellion.
Issue 27: LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcomn X.
Issue 29: Debate on the unions; Italian workers organise.
Issue 37: Pornography; Booze, cigs and dope; Moral panics.
Issue 40: Work, work, work; Art as a weapon.
Issue 46: Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin; Syndicalism.
Issue 48: French unemployed; Haillie Selassie; Revolutionary unions?
Issue 50: GM foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland - the `peace` process.
Issue 51: War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor.
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Issue 54: Civil war in Colombia; Humans and animals; Giving up activism; Dissent.
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Issue 58: Argentina: growing resistance; Paganism; Immigrant labour; Angola 3; US anarchist poets; Yellow House
Issue 59: Anarchism and Sex; Class Struggle in China; Arditi del Popolo; Scottish nationalism; Prison Industry; Zazous in Vichy France; Ito Noe.
Issue 60: Iraq War; Argentina; White Boys in Ireland; Fatherhood; Yelenski's fable; Senna Hoy.
Issue 61: Anti-war action; Argentina autonomous movement; New Economy; Airline strike; Punk Rock; Paris Commune; Prison Human Rights.
Issue 62: Participatory economics; Anarchist movement in Argentina; Camille Pissarro; International or Anarchist Federations.

Anti-war demonstrations in Hereford, 2003, saw many pupils leave school in support

colonise the 'human commons' in fact.
An interesting example of resistance to this attempted encroachment and an clear attempt to work outside of the bounds of capital relations (to construct 'a new commons') is the Burston strike of 1914, which was sparked off by the local bosses efforts to remove two socialist teachers from the local school as they were also involved in unionising local agricultural workers, and thereby directly effecting these bosses profits - the pupils struck and funds poured into build another 'strike school' which eventually happened in 1918 - the school was attended by those strikers and later children - the school itself lasted for 20 years in direct conflict with the state school.
There were also significant strikes over similar issues in 1914 , Pont Yates, Rathven and Bedford; 1917, in Washington and Usworth; 1919 in Gilfach Goch; 1920 in Northampton; 1922 in Keighly; 1924 in Ebbw Vale; 1926 in Watrerfoot; 1928 in Eaton; 1929 in Winsford, Llansamlet and Patcham, 1933 in Newmains; and Audley in 1938. (All in Humphries).
Humphries identified five areas in which school strikes were again and again the working class response to conflict over:
1) Corporal Punishment
2) Schools hours, holidays and leaving age
3) Free provision of education and welfare
4) Appointment of teachers
5) Location and Organisation of schools
It is plain that, taken together, these were conflicts over *community control* and *autonomy*, over who decides what is taught, where and when, and by whom - that the ruling class sought to portray these rebellions as childish pranks, or outbreaks of hooliganism or anti-social behaviour is no surprise, as to do otherwise would undermine the whole series of myths that capital has constructed and the lies that it tells itself about the reasons for it deigning to impose education on the working class in the forms that is chose.
These strikes testify to the long running and tenacious struggle of working class communities to resist ceding control of their education and socialisation to the needs of capital, to the consistent refusal to buckle under, a refusal of obedience and conformity to capital's dictates, in favour of acting collectively to impose working class needs on the bosses - to in effect, run their own lives. That students and pupils today are still acting in this tradition (albeit in solidarity with the Iraqi working class rather than classmates) is a testament to the sheer strength of collective action and the refusal to forget this no matter how much the bosses seek to make us.

Sources/Notes:
(1) *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth*, Stephen Humphries
(2) Class Struggle, Self-help and Popular Welfare, Chris Jones and Tony Novak in *Class Struggle and Social Welfare*, Eds Michael Lavelette and Gerry Mooney
(3) *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Mariarosa Dalla Costa & Selma James
Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears, Geoffrey Pearson
Children's Strikes in 1911, Dave Mason

we don't need to be schooled to learn

"There has always been a proportion of pupils who attend unwillingly, who resent the authority of the school and its arbitrary regulations and who put a low value on the processes of education because their own experience tells them it is an obstacle race in which they are so often the losers that they would be mugs to enter the competition." (Colin Ward, "The Role of The State" in Education Without Schools 1973.

Our schools are factories for learning
Education is pretty bad. The rat race of getting qualifications and school league tables (which has the schools and teachers cheating as well!) leaves millions of children in dead-end jobs or permanently excluded from society. Schooling is what the state wants. Our early system was shaped by the emerging centralised state and the needs of the iron-masters and mill-owners of the Industrial Revolution. It taught a narrow curriculum of basic skills via the catechism of church and factory: hard work, obedience, deference to authority. FW Taylor, a god to 20th Century industrialists, wrote: *"One of the very first requirements for a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he be so stupid ..... that he more nearly resembles an ox than any other type".*
Even before state-organised, mandatory and universal schooling got properly going, working class activists and leaders opposed it as dangerous to freedom. In 1793 William Godwin said: *"...the project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government...Government will not fail to strengthen its hand and perpetuate its institutions".* The state must protect and sustain itself, so it demands coercive and hierarchical institutions whose ultimate function is to brainwash people to accept their place in an increasingly organised and socially unequal society. Libertarians know this very well: *The greater the amount of money that is poured into the education systems of the world, the less it benefits the people at the bottom. The universal education system turns out to be yet another way in which the poor subsidise the rich"* (Colin Ward).

Free schools & social change
These ideas are constantly challenged by people trying to bring about positive change in society. Very often these have been the product of poverty and extreme oppression, when the struggle of working people against their 'masters' has been most intense. At other times, social stagnation and a conservative culture have inspired people to create such schools in the name of freedom. Their aim has always been the same: to change society in positive ways by equipping children to challenge all the assumptions and systems of society, its institutions and agencies, as adults. Many of the children who experienced this form of teaching and education went on to become pioneers in modern education, radical activists, trade union leaders and politicians. In countries where the state was extremely oppressive, they often paid for this liberation with exile, long prison-terms, torture and death.

The modern schools movement
One of the most powerful and widely-practiced examples of libertarian education are Modern Schools, which were invented by spanish anarchist and educator Francisco Ferrer ý Guardia. Ferrer wanted to challenge the oppressive nature of the educational system, controlled by the Catholic Church but not through politics or violent agitation. Instead, he chose to defy the state by starting a school in Barcelona based on freedom of choice and expression, learning for learning's sake and the imperative of finding one's own truth. He thought the best way to create a just society was to raise a new generation of children on just, humane and democratic principles. Ferrer believed that education shouldn't just be a preparation for life but life itself. From anarchist and libertarian thinking, he borrowed key words like "freedom", "spontaneity", "creativity", "individuality" and "self-realization" as the basis for his educational philosophy.
Ferrer set up the *Escuela Moderna* in 1901. Along with primary education, it incorporated adult education and a leftist publishing house. Basic to Ferrer's philosophy was the intention to develop individuals equipped mentally, morally and physically to build a future libertarian society: *"We [ ] we want men* [sic] *who will continue unceasingly to develop; men who are capable of constantly destroying and renewing their surroundings and renewing themselves.... eager for the triumph of new ideas, anxious to crowd many lives into the life they have."*
The school thrived but the state felt threatened by its existence and the *Escuela Moderna* was shut down in 1906 when Ferrer was implicated in a plot to assassinate King Alfonso XIII. On July 26 1909, workers in Barcelona began protests that escalated into riot, rebellion and a repression so brutal that this time is still known as the "Tragic Week." Ferrer was arrested, tried as a leader of the protests and finally executed despite an international campaign. All over the world, a movement ensued to start Modern Schools in Ferrer's memory.
In New York, for instance, the Francisco Ferrer Association was formed by anarchist leaders Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman amongst others. In 1911 a Modern School opened in Greenwich Village with nine students and was soon part of a thriving movement across the US. The Modern School of New York, like it's Spanish predecessor, featured a publishing house, adult education centre, and served as a community centre for the whole neighbourhood.
Modern Schools sprang up throughout the world (including here in Britain) and the Modern School network remains very large even today. But the limitations of education alone in bringing about radical

change in society have to be understood as well. The Modern School Movement was the product of an era when radical experimenters in art, education and communal living all came together to pursue common goals, the highest of which was to create a better world for all. The overriding belief which sustained them was this: If we could only raise a generation of children who were free of race and class prejudice, of a belief in the necessity of war, and who could think their own minds and solve their own problems, then a new social order would, in fact, be possible.

The Liverpool anarchist-communist sunday school

The Liverpool Anarchist-Communist Sunday School began meeting in November 1908. Its inspiration was a young man, Jimmy Dick, who had become discontented with the world of work, started attending classes at the university and later met Francisco Ferrer. The school opened with 37 pupils and the intention: *"To break down the national prejudices and that patriotic piffle which is inculcated into the children of our present-day schools"* and *"... To point out to them that humility, patience and submission are no longer virtues, if they ever were; and that they must own themselves"*. The school taught primarily through lectures and discussions, often very political! This was because it was seeking deliberately to open children's minds to politics as a means for them to begin to challenge their situation and prepare for an adult life as activists: *"The State and Church capture the children for they know that the children of today are the citizens of tomorrow.....A child will think if we teach it to do so; but leave it to the mercy of the present school method and it will grow up in a spirit of subservience."* It's no different today, if you think about it.

The school flourished. On Empire Day 1909, students distributed 2000 leaflets attacking imperial celebrations in schools. Later in the year they were involved in the campaign to save Francisco Ferrer from execution, publishing a pamphlet about the tragedy and changing the name of the school to the International Modern School in his honour. In 1910, adult classes were launched and new teachers brought different teaching methods; classes based around free-ranging topics and discussion rather than lectures became very popular. Students were also increasingly involved in deciding what would be discussed and taught.

In 1911 there was a massive backlash against the school, prompted by the Siege of Sidney Street. Newspapers alleged that an international anarchist conspiracy existed, and one of its tentacles were the anarchist sunday schools. The International Modern School rented its premises from the local Independent Labour Party (which eventually became Labour, then New Labour). Frightened for their electoral prospects by association with anarchists (does this sound familiar?), the School was asked to leave. The School moved on and continued the lonely fight for existence, often battling the rigid approaches of the Socialist Sunday Schools who wanted to 'improve' the working class by drilling it in its own 'Socialist Catechisms' and 'Commandments'. This approach obviously still exists today, especially in the faith schools Tony Blair and New Labour favour. But as Jimmy Dick said almost 100 years ago: *"The repetition of these moral musings does not tend to develop the mind, but rather to hinder the natural development of the child."*

Free school experiments

The Anarchist-Communist Sunday School did not pioneer many radical teaching methods during its life, but it illustrated the impoverished nature of the state school system, which continues today. Many people have tried to organise alternatives to the state system, schools that are outside state control or which have a radically different approach to learning. Sticking with the Liverpool theme, two examples where people *did* try to change approaches to learning were the Scotland Road Free School and the Liverpool Free School, which existed in the early 1970s.

The Scotland road free school

The Scotland Road Free School became was nationally important and encouraged the formation of other free schools throughout the country. Two local teachers wanted to establish a school run by children, parents and teachers together, without a headmaster, centralised authority or the usual hierarchies. It would be open when it was needed and lessons would be optional. The school issued a prospectus, saying: *"The school will be a community school....totally involved with its environment.....the vanguard of social change"*. At its opening in 1970, 80 parents and 50 children had committed themselves to the experiment.

The school had no rules, attendance was voluntary, there was no uniform, no homework, no punishment, no formal lessons, no syllabus and children were not controlled by individual teachers. Relationships between adults and children were open, friendly and free from coercion, unlike modern schools. School meetings made decisions about activities and the use of the building. Though lack of resources restricted what the school could do and the children could learn, attendance was pretty constant even though the majority of the students were non-attenders or had been excluded. There were frequent outings, making use of the world outside as a teaching environment. In contrast, one of those 'much-loved' local schools, St Anthony's, was notorious for the severity of its discipline and the brutality of the beatings handed out to the unruly or rebellious.

'The school had no rules, attendance was voluntary, there was no uniform, no homework, no punishment, no formal lessons, no syllabus and children were not controlled by individual teachers. Relationships between adults and children were open, friendly and free from coercion, unlike modern schools.'

The school's founders thought the example of the Free School would inspire other people and communities to establish schools, resulting in *"the fragmentation of the state system into smaller, all-age, personalised, democratic, locally-controlled community schools which can best serve the immediate needs of the area...."* Inspired by the example of the state-funded *frijskole* in Denmark, they naively thought the Government would fund the Free School without realising that the Scandinavian system was the result of long-term community pressure for independent schools and not the revolutionary example of a single, short-term experiment. This is how permanent progress occurs, through *social* change, not individual initiative as innovative as it is. Without financial support and in a working class community damaged by unemployment and poverty, the school closed in 1972 despite continuing to have the support of local people.

Another free school, the Liverpool Free School, also existed at this time inside the local university. It started up on Saturday mornings but intended to become a full-time day school. Like the Scotland Road Free School, what was learned and how was decided by the children. It funded itself from a voluntary levy and occasional grants from supportive organisations.

Though a small-scale, spontaneous initiative that never grew beyond its limits, it has a profound effect on the 300 children who attended during its existence. This was the first and perhaps only experience of freedom the children would have in their lives: they could co-operate or learn on their own, play, study or do nothing at all, as they decided. Said one student: *"The wouldn't let all schools be like this would they? It might be really disorganised but I like being able to learn what I want, when I want."*

It doesn't have to be this way.

It's known that children can quickly acquire all the skills and knowledge taught in the first seven years of school in around six months of more intensive teaching. So why are children being forced to learn formally at two? Children are isolated from society and learn nothing about how it functions.

Nowadays these are increasingly faith schools or specialist 'academies' where selection rules. Any alternative is viewed with suspicion and hostility. Yet everybody who works pays for state schooling and ought to have a say. We've been conditioned to think that education must be expensive (the higher education of the children of the upper and middle classes *is* expensive!); that it is too complex for ordinary people and must be left to experts; and that it is so vital it is best organised by large and powerful institutions, like the local education authority or the state. Like most things we are taught to believe, this is a lie.

There is a great deal of scientific knowledge about how children and adults learn best and actual examples like the 'Modern' and 'Ferrer' schools that have decades of experience in education and learning to build on. What's needed are for parents, students, educationalists and local people to come together to campaign to return schooling to local control. Schools and learning centres need to be thoroughly reorganised, with reactionary forces like business - especially corporate business - and the churches excluded. The authority and social standing of autocratic headteachers needs to be challenged and broken and too compliant and often exclusive boards of governors replaced with democratic forums managing schools. The state can be challenged and forced to meet the needs of ordinary people. The example of the Scandinavian *frijskole* tells us this is possible if we want it badly enough. Do we?

'We've been conditioned to think that education must be expensive, that it is too complex for ordinary people and must be left to experts, and that it is so vital it is best organised by large and powerful institutions, like the local education authority or the state. Like most things we are taught to believe, this is a lie.'

Yet some schools (e.g. the Parkway Educational Program in Philadelphia, US) got rid of their school buildings in favour of 8-10 community-based 'shopfront' classes providing a local base and facilities but with most teaching taking place in the community: *"arts students study at the Art Museum, biology students at the zoo; business and vocational courses meet at on-the-job sites such as journalism at a newspaper or mechanics at a garage"*.

The Scotland Road Free School didn't teach labour relations with textbooks. It took its students to the nearby Fisher-Bendix factory when the workers were on strike.

Why aren't all schools like this? The state will only pay for schooling it approves of.

Notes

For up to date information on libertarian education, go to www.libed.org.uk For a different take on libertarian education, try the Anarchist Guide To Raising Kids at www.zpub.com/notes/aan-kids.html

A very good description of what libertarian education's about can be found at www.infoshop.org/faq/secj6.html

For a basic introduction to Modern Schools, go to Section 13 at www.infoshop.org.faq/secJ5.html

For modern examples of alternative education 'without walls', go to www.tradequeerthings.com/anarchistfree.html or www.ainfos.ca.03.aug

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review

Kropotkin: The politics of community
Brian Morris 2004 Humanity Press, New York

Brian is well known to the pages of Organise! and Freedom. He is one of those rare academics who want to spread ideas through teaching and writing for a wide-range of publications rather than through obscure academic texts. His writing is always well researched and scholarly whilst remaining accessible to a wide audience.

His new book on Kropotkin is the result of many years of research. Parts of this research have already appeared in previous issues of Organise! It is not only an excellent and thorough presentation of Kropotkin's ideas, but also provides the reader with an overview of the anarchist communist or social anarchist current within anarchism as distinct from syndicalism, individualism and 'propaganda by the deed'.

The book, though written in a lively and down-to-earth style, is still an academic book and is best appreciated by those with some background in political and social theory. However, anyone can gain something from the straightforward presentation of Kropotkin's ideas.

Brian's main aim is to "affirm the contemporary relevance of Kropotkin and the social anarchist tradition he theorised and defended."

In the introduction he attacks the "despair" preached by today's intellectuals who may criticise the current system but offer no alternatives and end up effectively propping up the status quo. In many ways, he is addressing the same problems discussed in the pamphlet by Sarah Young (reviewed also in this issue), but from the perspective of those engaged in public theorising. This might seem irrelevant to the average person, but the despair of these intellectuals is filtered down to the rest of us indirectly through the mass media and has therefore contributed to the general feeling of hopelessness. Though he agrees to an extent with their critique, he lambastes them for their failure to provide any useful theory or ideas for actually understanding and changing the world.

Instead, Brian is adamant in his belief that it is Kropotkin and the tradition of social anarchism that offer "the only viable alternative to democratic liberalism and Marxism, both of which, as we have noted, are politically bankrupt" (p.20).

Brian does not give wholehearted support to everything Kropotkin did or wrote. Anarchists, unlike Marxists, do not tend to treat any of our forbearers as infallible. He takes an approach of "critical sympathy", acknowledging the enormous debt we owe Kropotkin and others who developed both the theory and practice of social anarchism, but recognising that like everyone, he is a human being who may make errors of judgement and analysis.

This book offers the reader a superb overview of the tradition that the Anarchist Federation comes from and is aiming to develop. It will show people who are fed up with the main political options (see the pamphlet by Sarah Young, reviewed in this issue), that there is an alternative politics for developing a movement of resistance and constructing a new society.

A socialist's guide for the 21st century. Jack Grassby. TUPS Books. £4.95. 149 pages.

A belated review this, because it's been out for a few years. An odd book. The writer says that he adopts a basic Marxist perspective. He gives a brief description of Marxism, and then goes on to discuss postmodernism and existentialism, chaos/complexity theory, socio-biology, before devoting a chapter to the State. This chapter barely mentions anarchist criticisms of the State and blurs the distinction between Leninist and anarchist approaches to it. Political parties are dealt with next, starting with the Labour Party and gradualist/evolutionary socialism, before looking at the 'revolutionary socialist' tradition, where it picks out the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Socialist Workers Party as examples of this tradition, in a somewhat odd choice. It then touches on the anarchists. The writer acknowledges that anarchism's "current expression of anti-capitalist direct action gives it a contemporary expression. However, he then goes through the usual categories, irrelevant in this period, that anarchism is divided into by so-called experts outside of the tradition. So we get individualist anarchism (just how many individualists are there in today's international anarchist movement? Not a lot!) as developed by Max Striner (he means Max Stirner); and Tolstoyan anarchism (again, how many Tolstoyans are around these days?), when Tolstoy, whilst exhibiting some anarchist outlooks was careful never to call himself an anarchist. The Industrial Workers of the World, the revolutionary union set up in the States, is mistakenly referred to as anarcho-syndicalist. Then the writer comments that the greatest prevailing anarchist influence has been in education, in particular higher education where a " generally democratic, non-authoritarian climate prevails". Hmmm.
The Anarchist Federation is then mentioned. Georges Fontenis' Manifesto of Libertarian Communism is then described as the foundation document of modern anarchism. Now, Fontenis's document, written in 1953, is very interesting, but is it really the "foundation document" of modern anarchists? The author says that he is reprinting it in full on the following pages, instead of which we get the Aims and Principles of the Anarchist Federation!
The author investigates direct action, looking at the anti-capitalist mobilisations that began with Seattle, Reclaim the Streets, and the Claimants Unions. He touches upon the trades unions, and despite criticisms, still sees them as "the best examples of mass democratic action around- or can be". Surely not the same bodies that attempt to control workers when they undertake wildcat actions?
The police are seen as the public arm of the State, but then the author goes on to peculiarly say that "as they have sometimes seen more of the injustices perpetrated by society than the rest of us, some are actually sympathetic (but usually covertly) to socialist values. In the double vision of the law the police belong to the people as well as to the state. The Human Rights Act should heighten this dichotomy of responsibility." I would agree that the police need to be subverted, and propaganda aimed at them, but when it comes to the crunch, the overwhelming mass of the police will side with the State and the boss class. Illusions about human rights enshrined in the law and their positive effects are all too common in this book.
I really would like to be more charitable about this book. The writer is not dogmatic, and is genuinely looking for solutions about how to reconnect to the mass of the population. Unfortunately this book is sloppy in its research and its conclusions. Ethical foreign policies are touched upon, where there is precious little evidence that such policies are actually implemented, and somehow organisations and institutions connected to the United Nations are seen to be establishing socialist values!
The Rich at Play: Foxhunting, land ownership and the 'Countryside Alliance'. 75 pages. Revolutions Per Minute. £4.
This pamphlet shows that the main forces behind those campaigning to keep foxhunting are the major landowners and the aristocracy. It goes on to prove that leading members of the monarchy, Anne, Charles, Phillip and William are actively and enthusiastically involved in hunting, and give just as active and enthusiastic support, undercover or otherwise, to the Countryside Alliance.
The section the Land Question touches upon the origins of foxhunting and shows how it is intimately related to the firm establishment of feudalism by the Norman conquerors. William the Conqueror established the principles of land management in Britain. He emphasised hunting "Namely, that facilitating the private pleasure of the privileged few was a legitimate basis for determining the allocation of land in Britain. Secondly that the landowner possessed the right to do whatever he liked …with his land irrespective of the impact of his land-use decisions on other members of the community" p. 6.
With this came stringent laws against poaching of game by the mass of the country population.
With the industrial revolution came the displacement of many via enclosure of the land and criminalisation of those who objected. The rising new industrial elite looked to pickings in the countryside. Bankers, brewers and lawyers were among those of the new rich who bought up land to enhance their social status. They aped the habits of the rural aristocracy and gentry, putting on lavish hunt breakfasts, generously subscribing to the local foxhounds and stocking their coverts with pheasants.
The pamphlet advances the theory that the defenders of foxhunting have created an elaborate mythology around it to restrict the debate to issues, which whilst important, are subsidiary to the main ones. That is, "that the rich are using massive areas of land that were stolen from the ordinary people of Britain to pursue their own personal pleasure."
The pamphlet then systematically demolishes these freshly minted myths, like the so-called working class following for foxhunting. It playfully suggests the following programme
1. A right to roam and repossession of the land
2.Stop foxhunting with hounds, either with concerted political action or direct intervention on a local basis, normally with other local hunt saboteurs
3. The right to hunt the rich
The pamphlet argues strongly for the land question to be a main plank in the fight against foxhunting and the Countryside Alliance, as a mobilising factor in drawing together the largest number of people possible. It is noted that the Countryside Alliance is not just a movement against foxhunting, but a conscious manoeuvre by sections of the ruling class against recent attacks on their privileges like the right to roam and the growth of environmental concerns and the environmental movement. The right are mobilising and are prepared to use direct action to protect their privileges. We have to encourage counter-mobilisation on a mass scale. We need to use the language of class struggle to break any alliance (always an unequal one) that the Countryside Alliance and its supporters are attempting to forge between the wealthy landowners and sections of the rural working class. In that fight, this pamphlet can be a useful weapon. Use it to back up your arguments, take additional copies of this pamphlet and sell it to your friends and workmates. As the pamphlet concludes "combine your activities, invite other organisations from the town and cities to join and get out into the communities and workplaces to build a mass campaign, which will end fox hunting for good and set the people on a course to 'reclaim the land'".

Orgasms of History: 3,000 years of spontaneous insurrection. Yves Fremin. AK Press. £12.00. 248 pages.

This book, written by a French veteran of May 1968, attempts to take a look at the riots, uprisings and revolutions that "spring up seemingly from nowhere". It's a wide-ranging work, touching upon the Cynics, Spartacus through to the Bavarian Council Republic and the Spanish Revolution up to 1968 and beyond. And this is what flaws it. Fremin should have stuck to an account of the real 'orgasms of history'- those events that radically broke with the past, not schools of thought like the Cynics of Ancient Greece. He also has an odd and anachronistic way of using the term 'Stalinism' in relation to events hundreds of years before the birth of Stalin. In his introduction he admits this, seeing it as an "archetype of totalitarianism and authoritarianism".
Fremin also has admiration for the peasantry and he is careful to include several examples of peasant uprisings.
The book is entertaining and often informative read, but it is too often too eclectic, mixing up thinkers with revolutions. It seems a bit odd to have various social experiments like La Ruche or the Cempuis Orphanage, worthy as they are, shoulder to shoulder with the Makhnovist insurrection in the Ukraine, when the book is entitled Orgasms of History. Especially when bohemian/hippy experiments like Christiania or the San Francisco Diggers feature.
Nevertheless, Fremin's heart is in the right place and his outlook is always cheerfully and optimistically libertarian with a class struggle approach. Despite its flaws an interesting read.

Thinking allowed: A manifesto for successful political change in Britain and the world Sarah Young 2004

This is an important and original pamphlet that addresses key questions that are often ignored by many political activists, including anarchists. Political propaganda is usually directed at exposing the horrors of capitalist exploitation and state oppression with the hidden assumption that this will make people so angry that they will want to do something about it. Sarah questions this strategy. Her starting point is that there are a whole layer of people who are well-aware of the horrific state that the world is in. "A tremendous amount is known about what is wrong with the world." However, despite all this knowledge, people are not doing anything. "We know the world needs to change, but we have no clear vision of how this is going to happen". This pamphlet addresses this crucial question- how can we go from despair to active participation in the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of a new society.
The pamphlet seems to be directed specifically at young people, but it is relevant to all. She starts from the real life conditions faced by the average young person, writing in such a way that a person can easily identify the feelings expressed. So instead of beginning with the global problems of war, economic exploitation and ecological crisis, she begins with the problems that young people are experiencing in their own lives such as the uncertainty of future employment and housing, the lack of opportunities for living a fulfilling life, and the psychological problems of the pressures to 'succeed' and to conform.
The pamphlet then takes an extremely critical and perceptive look at what is on offer for people who do decide that they want to get involved. Though her critique of electoralism, reformism and trade unionism could be more developed and hard-hitting her exposure of the manipulative and effectively counter-revolutionary antics of the revolutionary parties is excellent. She lambasts them for their manipulative and authoritarian politics that have effectively put so many people off political activity altogether. She then goes on to discuss the potential for change. Again, she bases her analysis on the actual lives of people rather than on abstractions. She uses voluntary work, vocational paid work in such areas as health and education and single issue campaigns in the work place and community as examples of spaces where individuals are able to make a difference. By doing this she is not supporting gradualism, working within the system or localism, but is trying to show the kind of activities that people do that can give them "expertise and confidence"; two things that are essential for building a revolutionary movement that is capable of creating a new society.
"Our small but creative lives are of great magnitude of importance because they allow the possibility that change can happen and be successful."
The pamphlet's main point is questioning the way in which revolutionary politics is something people often separate from their everyday lives. Political activists will go on demonstrations, take direct action and issue propaganda on street corners but then not 'talk politics' to their families, neighbours, workmates or to people 'down the gym or pub'. As Sarah says, politics is a 'hobby' that people do 'in addition' to their normal lives. This is a message that all of us in the anarchist movement should take seriously for three main reasons.
We need to recognise that social change does not happen overnight and that the big changes only occur as a result of countless small actions that people have taken in their everyday lives. Physical scientists call this the 'butterfly effect'-where a small change in one particle can affect a particle elsewhere. The same effect is at work in society- small actions can have

big effects without it being obvious how this has happened. In other words, just because an action may seem small and insignificant doesn't mean that if hasn't had an impact. You just can't see obvious evidence of that impact.

Secondly, politics must not be something people do but something people live. This point is especially important for British anarchists. In countries such as Italy, Spain and France, anarchism is much more of a living tradition. They are more likely to remain active anarchists throughout their lives because it is more incorporated into their everyday lives, which will include work, families and hobbies. In Britain, the movement is dominated by relatively young 'activists' who operate in a kind of anarchist ghetto. They are unlikely to continue this so-called anarchist lifestyle very long and therefore risk dropping politics because their approach to politics will not be able to accommodate being political with work and families.

And thirdly, we have to think carefully about how we build up people's confidence to fight back. The AF has taken this into consideration with our monthly bulletin Resistance. Instead of spreading more 'doom and gloom', we try and show examples of people actually resisting capitalism and the State.

However, as an organised, social anarchist I would take issue with two issues.

Firstly, there is no explicit discussion of the working class. Though we in the AF have a very broad definition of working class, and recognise that some people shy away from the term because it seems to include only miners and factory workers, it is important that we are clear about the basis of a new revolutionary movement. Sarah's focus on those in certain occupations that she calls vocations, involves a very narrow sector of the working class. That doesn't mean the point she makes is invalid. But there are many other jobs where important skills are being learned- construction, design, plumbing, farm work to name a few. Revolutionary movements have often included skilled workers who took pride in their craft- such as the Jura watchmakers- the founders of the first anarchist international. Confidence also comes from all manner of work place resistance, often outside the trade union structures, and also helps to build confidence and expertise in organising.

It is also important to consider the class character and political orientation of many single issue campaigns.

Though she stresses community fight backs, which will of course involve working class people, many of the current single issue campaigns such as Stop the War, Greenpeace actions and anti-G8 mobilisations are dominated by students, unemployed 'activists' and Trotskyists. The recent European Social Forum as well as the alternative 'Beyond the European Social Forum' in London could be seen as something the pamphlet is arguing for- the linking up of a number of different campaigns. However, both the official and unofficial forums had little relationship to the vast majority of working class Londoners. It was primarily a place for 'activists' or people sponsored by well-heeled organisations to meet up. It is hard to see how such events can contribute to the building of a working class revolutionary movement.

Secondly, the final conclusion of the pamphlet argues that there is no worthwhile organisation or political theory that can take us forward. The pamphlet doesn't offer us anything more than a view that people can only take small actions and begin to link up, somehow hoping that something new will emerge.

In the Anarchist Federation we of course believe that our tradition, based on the principles of anti-capitalist and anti-State working class resistance, is a viable alternative to the bankruptcy of reformism, leftist parties and the lack of relevance to the working class of ESF-style events. The anarchist principles of federalism and rejection of central committees and majority (or in many cases minority) imposed ideas and actions, combine co-ordination of action and sharing of ideas on the local, national and even international level, with individual freedom. The fact that we exist as an organisation means that this pamphlet can be given the publicity it deserves.

Organise! is read around the country as well as abroad. Of course, our practice does not always fit our theory and there is always a need to be open to new ideas that emerge out of new experiences and struggles. But there is no need to wait around for an alternative to reformism and leftism, and remain as isolated individuals and groups. The author of this pamphlet is clearly an anarchist - she should join us!

You can order copies from Sarah by e-mailing her at northernsky@hush.com.

Mikhail Bakunin; the philosophical basis of his anarchism
Paul McLaughlin
Algora Publications, New York, 2002

Harassed, abused, jailed, denigrated, ridiculed, misunderstood in his own day, poor old Bakunin has long been treated by Marxists and liberal scholars alike in the most appalling and derogatory fashion. In the pages of "Freedom", supposedly an anarchist newspaper, many correspondents have now jumped enthusiastically upon this anti-Bakunin bandwagon. Its columns are thus full of petty criticisms and pathetic tirades against Bakunin, who is dismissed as a potential dictator, a Bolshevik no less, and a moral reprobate. Even worse, social anarchists - those dreadful atheists and materialists - are tarred with the same brush; accused of being wicked, nasty "fundamentalists", with their heads full of utopian "fantasies" This is because, unlike the spiritualists who place their faith in god, they are unable, as materialists, to face the openness and uncertainties of human life. These tirades, written from a theological perspective, are of course nothing new: these correspondents simply revamp criticisms of Bakunin and materialism that were made long, long ago by philosophical idealists, liberal savants and political reactionaries. Most of these criticisms are either malicious, or misplaced, or both.

A decade ago (1993) I wrote a short book on the remarkable life and political philosophy of Michael Bakunin, for in a real sense old Bakunin was one of the first to outline social anarchism as a coherent philosophy. I did not have any particular fondness for Bakunin, yet the idea that anyone expressing an interest in the ideas of Bakunin is thereby advocating a "great man" theory of history (suggested by one correspondent to "Freedom"), seems to me quite facile. Regurgitating the tired mantras and holy writ of such academic gurus as Laclau and Lyotard - who are by no stretch of the imagination anarchists - this correspondent seems himself to embrace the "great man" theory of history! No. What motivated me to write the book on Bakunin was the arrogant and despicable way in which the old anarchist had been treated by his liberal and Marxist critics, and the dismissive attitude of one "primitivist" who declared, in oracular fashion, that the ideas of Bakunin were "obsolete". A recent correspondent in "Freedom" likewise boldly acclaims that Bakunin is now merely an "historical curio", and that we should therefore abandon his social anarchism - especially as it entails atheism and a materialist ontology. Much better to put our faith in god, seek spiritual redemption and thus find happiness in the "afterlife"! It is therefore not unusual to find in the pages of "Freedom" correspondents advocating sociobiology, possessive individualism and free-market capitalism; parliamentary democracy as a political strategy in order that anarchists may have more contemporary "relevance"; and these anti-Bakunin theologians who advocate spiritual redemption through faith in god. These, of course, constitute the "unholy trinity" - capitalism, state power, and religion - that Bakunin and other anarchists critiqued more than a century ago.

My book attempted to counter the more malevolent critiques of Bakunin - for Bakunin was not without his foibles, ethnic prejudices and political misjudgements - and to suggest the contemporary relevance of the ideas of this much maligned social anarchist, in the same way as the ideas of Darwin still have salience for evolutionary biologists.

In spite of the perverse anti-Bakunin sentiments expressed in the pages of "Freedom" there has in fact been a genuine renewal of interest in Bakunin in recent years, and this is reflected in Paul McLaughlin's excellent study of Bakunin's philosophy, which provides both a defence of Bakunin's ideas as against Marxist and liberal scholarship, and an interpretation of his philosophy. The book is focussed on the philosophical foundations of Bakunin's social thought, rather than on his anarchism, but it does offer a spirited (and scholarly) defence of Bakunin's philosophy, one that combines the logic of negative dialectics with an ontology of evolutionary naturalism. Like Murray Bookchin, the philosophy that Bakunin expressed in embryonic form can perhaps best be described as dialectical naturalism. This philosophy is not a crude form of mechanistic materialism; something that is completely lost on his theological detractors in "Freedom".

The critics of Bakunin

In my book I tried to defend Bakunin as against both his Marxist and liberal critics. Marx famously described Bakunin as a philosophical "ignoramus", and Marxists have invariably followed their mentor in describing Bakunin as a petit-bourgeois ideologist like Proudhon, or as a misguided romantic with a bent for destruction and secret societies, and pour scorn on Bakunin for his "elitist despotism". Hal Draper, for example, saw Bakunin as essentially a revolutionary brigand, whose politics involved little more than pillage, theft and murder, while Lichtheim wrote that all that Bakunin's anarchism entailed was a "chiliastic vision of an armed uprising that would smash state and society" (Morris 1993:136). Thankfully, McLaughlin continues and develops my defence of Bakunin and offers a strident critique of his Marxist critics, whom he felt were critical of Bakunin mainly because the anarchist had dared to challenge the philosophical doctrines and statist politics of their hero Marx. McLaughlin notes that the Marxist scholars who dismiss Bakunin as a "voluntarist" (in being ignorant of the political economy) or as an apolitical "bandit", never actually studied in depth the theoretical writings of Bakunin. McLaughlin focuses his own analysis on two Marxists scholars, George Lichtheim and Francis Wheen. Lichtheim, as noted, had portrayed Bakunin as a mindless revolutionary, a misguided romantic with an insatiable faith in the goodness of humankind, yet one who, nevertheless, was bent on "pan destruction". This portrait of Bakunin McLaughlin fervently critiques, suggesting rather than being a hopeless romantic bent on destruction, Bakunin had his roots in the Enlightenment tradition, and that his main philosophical interests were in the development of Enlightenment naturalism and "anti-theologism"(4). With regard to Wheen's biography of Marx, which includes a chapter on Bakunin entitled "The Rogue Elephant", McLaughlin suggests that this chapter is simply a regurgitation of what Marxists have been writing about Bakunin for many decades, and that the truth value of the chapter approaches zero. The "superfluity of this work, the idiocy of its tone, and the poverty of its content overall" meant, for McLaughlin, that Wheen's account of Bakunin lacked any scholarly merit (5-6).

Liberal scholars have been even more hostile to Bakunin. Eugene Pyziur, whom a "Freedom" correspond cites with glowing approval, also claimed that Bakunin was the "apostle of pan destruction" and thereby a precursor of Bolshevism; Bakunin's early biographer, E.H.Carr thought Bakunin an advocate of "extreme individualism", as in essence a Hegelian idealist, and as a precursor of Italian fascism; and the well-known liberal scholar Isaiah Berlin, in an essay that is biased, crude and highly prejudiced, in spite of Berlin's eloquence, declared that Bakunin, for all his love of humanity, was like Robespierre prepared to wade through "seas of blood" to achieve his political aims, and that Bakunin was thus akin to Attila and had a "fascist streak" (Morris 1993:73).

Even more biased and crude is Aileen Kelly's awful study of Bakunin, subtitled "a study in the psychology and politics of Utopianism". A "lackey" of Berlin's, Kelly is interested neither in Bakunin as a person, nor in his anarchism - which is dismissed as of "little merit". In fact her book, as I have described elsewhere, is simply one long diatribe against Bakunin, whom she portrays as fanatical, gullible, vindictive, megalomaniac, an idealist and romantic dilettante who lived in a fantasy world and was completely out of touch with reality. Bakunin she implied was a prototype of the alienated intellectual, an appellation that fits this Oxbridge scholar more easily than it does Bakunin (Morris 1993:3).

Throughout his book McLaughlin offers further refreshing, harsh and substantive critiques of the work of these liberal scholars, particularly Berlin and Kelly. Dismissing Berlin as a profoundly unoriginal thinker and an apologist for capitalism, McLaughlin notes that Berlin's famous distinction between positive and negative freedom is actually filched from Bakunin's own writings (17). Kelly's study, though

seemingly impressive and with the trappings of scholarship, McLaughlin argues is seriously flawed. Ignorant of philosophy, never seriously engaging with Bakunin's social anarchism, and ideologically and wilfully biased against Bakunin's socialism, Kelly's study of "utopian psychology" is a work, McLaughlin contends, of a liberal "fanatic" - full of bias, slander, puerile abuse, and intellectual naivety. Kelly's invoking of the "Stalinist nightmare", and insinuating the idea that Bakunin was a Bolshevik in the making - a thesis also falsely propagated by Pyziur and a correspondent in "Freedom" - McLaughlin demonstrates that this notion is both unjust and slanderous, and stems from Kelly's "utter ignorance" of Bakunin's social anarchism, which actually provides a trenchant critique of the "Stalinist" tendencies inherent within Marxism (12).

McLaughlin's book consists only of two long chapters or parts: one on Bakunin's negative dialectics, the other on Bakunin's naturalism and his critique of theologism - which for Bakunin meant not only religious ideologies, now promoted in the pages of "Freedom", but also the idealist metaphysics of Kant and Hegel. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Nagative Dialectics

As one of the Left-Hegelians, like Stirner and Marx, Bakunin, of course, was steeped in the philosophy of Hegel. According to McLaughlin, and contrary to Carr, Bakunin however did not fully embrace Hegelian metaphysics, for he repudiated both Hegel's idealism and his form of dialectics. For McLaughlin suggests that Bakunin's writings exemplify a revolutionary logic or negative dialectics in which negation is seen as a creative force - implying as Bakunin put it, a "sense of freedom", and as the one "true expression of justice and love" (Lehning 1973:43). In his well-known article "The Reaction in Germany", published anonymously in 1842 - the article Lehning suggests (1973:11) created a sensation in revolutionary circles in Germany - Bakunin offers a critique of what he calls the "reactionary party". Bakunin himself advocates "democracy" which for the anarchist entailed an opposition to government, and the total transformation of the socio-economic and political order, to herald "an original, new life which has not yet existed in history" (1973:39). The reactionaries for Bakunin belonged to two types: the Consistent reactionaries (or conservatives) who stood for the complete suppression of the negative (the suppression, that is, of those like Bakunin who stood for democracy and the complete negation of the existing conditions), and Compomising reactionaries (or liberals) who attempted some sort of compromise or reconciliation between the positive (existing capitalism and government) and the negative - that is, democracy or the revolutionary critique. Discussing this article at some length, McLaughlin notes that Bakunin, using Hegelian terminology, is essentially concerned with exploring the contradiction between the reactionary principle - the positive thesis of unfreedom - and its antithesis, the negative principle of freedom. But for Bakunin, McLaughlin argues, the dialectical process is not viewed as sublation, or as a positive dialectic (as with Hegel, Marx and Comte), still less as a "synthesis", but rather negation in itself is seen as an affirmative or creative principle - expressed as the principle of freedom or democracy (49).

Contradiction for Bakunin thus represents not a mediation nor an equilibrium but the "preponderance of the negative" (1973:49). In Bakunin's version of the dialectic there is no synthesis, for the nefative itself is seen as an "affirmative, creative principle", one that would engender a "new, affirmative and organic reality". Thus the slogans of the French revolution liberte, egalite and fraternite, were understood by Bakunin as implying the complete negation of the political and social world of the nineteenth century. The article concludes with the famous words "the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too" (1973:58). These words, McLaughlin argues, have been seriously misunderstood, for they did not imply mindless destruction, nor even nihilism, but rather Bakunin's negative logic, which implied the affirmation of freedom and the democratic order (30). Negation for Bakunin is thus an affirmation not a mediation or sublation - an affirmation of creativity and freedom. McLaughlin thus repudiates entirely Kell's attempt to foister upon Bakunin a triadic conception of history, which implied a "fall" from some mythical golden age of primitive harmony, and the eventual restoration of this harmony in some vision of a utopian society. For Bakunin expressed no nostalgia for some primitive golden age, and any speculations regarding some futuristic society Bakunin regarded as reactionary (55). As Bakunin expressed it in "Statism and Anarchy":

"Even the most rational and profound science cannot divine the form social life will take in the future. It can determine only the negative conditions, which follow logically from a rigorous critique of existing society" (1990: 198).

McLaughlin thus regards Kelly's attempt to portray Bakunin as a utopian thinker as quite "absurd". Even so, correspondents to "Freedom" are still peddling the same messianic thesis.

Bakunin's naturalism

The second part of McLaughlin's book gives a very good outline of Bakunin's evolutionary naturalism as well as of Bakunin's theory of religion, for in animportant sense Bakunin's naturalism is very much bound up with his critique of "theologism" - which embraces both religious ideologies and philosophical idealism. In Bakunin's nature philosophy nature, understood as universl causality, and reality are synonymous, Bakunin making a distinction between the natural world (as actualized) and nature as universal causality, that is, the possibilities inherent or imminent in the natural, material world.(105). Materialsm and naturalism, for McLaughlin, essentially have the same meaning, and he emphasizes that for Bakunin nature is dynamic, with "movement..of its own"(107). Influenced by Diderot, Feuerbach, Comte and Darwin, Bakunin's dialectical or evolutionary naturalism thus repudiates both theologism (idealism) and mechanistic materialism. It is a philosophy that is characterized by the belief that "life always precedes thought" and that objective or natural Being is always ontologically prior to human subjectivity; and that from an epistemological standpoint dialectical thinking precedes philosophical or theological speculation (33). In contrast metaphysics, or what McLaughlin calls anthropocentrism, articulates the belief that thought and human subjectivity precede

life and the objective natural world. Noting that Kantian metaphysics is radically opposed to naturalistic philosophy in its anthropocentrism, and given the subjectivist reactions of Kierkegaard, Stirner and the neo-Kantians against post-Hegelian philosophy, McLaughlin notes that much contemporary philosophy (whether Nietzschean, phenomenological, structuralist, post-structuralist, pragmatist or post-Marxist), besides being scholastic and obscurantist, is "absolutely antithetical to the naturalist tradition" to which Bakunin belongs. In spite of their radical pretences, much contemporary philosophy, Mclaughlin affirms, is both philosophically and politically reactionary (68). Even Marx, McLaughlin argues, given his undue emphasis on social mediation, is essentially closer to Kant than Hegel and thus there is a Kantian strand in his materialism (16).

Given the close association between Bakunin's naturalism and his atheism McLaughlin devotes a great deal of discussion to Bakunin's theory of religion, as well as to Feuerbach's philosophy. Indeed, Feuerbach's critique of theology and speculative philosophy had an important influence on Bakunin. Although religious consciousness may have been important in the development of human culture and in the affirmation of humanity, Bakunin was highly critical of the religion of his day, particularly Christianity, and for two reasons. Firstly, it is hostile to science and entails the abdication of human reason: and secondly, it involves the negation of human liberty (141), particularly in having a symbiotic relationship with political power. The latter is expressed in the oppression and exploitation of the mass of people by various functionaries - priests, monarchs, gendarmes, capitalists, entrepreneurs and politicians of every shade (148). Thus although Bakunin follows Hegel in viewing religion or the "divine idea" as the product of human consciousness, he also emphasizes the inadequacy of religion as a form of reason, and the need for human consciousness to develop beyond religion in order to realize itself (160)

Reason, the ability of humans to create culture - the faculty by which humans achieve the consciousness of freedom (which is how Bakunin understood the rational faculty) and the "spirit of revolt" are the two essential aspects, for Bakunin, of human nature (127). It is therefore of interest that the pages of "Freedom" nowadays resonate with fervent denunciations of reason and rationality, which is usually, be it noted, misleadingly equated with state management, bureaucratic administration and industrial capitalism - all of which, of course, Bakunin long ago repudiated. But what are we offered in the place of reason, as Bakunin and other Enlightenment thinkers defined it? Recent "Freedom" correspondents, it seems, join the ranks of scores of conservatives, fascists and romantic reactionaries in not only denigrating reason but put in its place faith in god, an emphasis on spiritual redemption and suggest we read Catholic theologians like Matthew Fox and Rosemary Radford Ruether. But Bakunin, it may be noted, was not only critical of theologism and statism, but also of deterministic "scientism", and was particularly hostile to the rule of scientific savants. As for Bakunin embracing the "myth of progress", be it also noted that Bakunin nowhere thought of capitalism and the modern nation state as in any sense inevitable or desirable, let alone "progressive"

Making an interesting comparison between the philosophies of Marx and Bakunin, McLaughlin emphasizes that Bakunin was always critical of the economic determinism that was inherent in Marx's materialist conception of history, and that Bakunin put much more stress than did Marx on the biological aspects of human life. Puzzled on how Marx "can assert that nature is prior to that by which it is essentially mediated"

McLaughlin interprets Marx as a Kantian idealist rather than as a "genuine" materialist(170). But of course Marx was affirming, like later anthropologists, that nature is ontologically prior to humans, though our knowledge of the world is always socially mediated.

In my earlier study I suggested that Bakunin's philosophical writings on nature presented, in embryonic form , an ecological approach to the world, one that is materialist and historical, and stresses the continuity and organic link between humans and nature(1993:84). This ecological world view is implicit in the philosophy of Feuerbach who wrote: "Man is dependent on nature…he should live in harmony with nature..even in his highest intellectual development he should not forget that he is a part and child of nature, but at all times honour nature and hold it sacred, not only as the ground and source of his existence, but also as the ground and source of his mental and physical well-being"(199).

For Feuerbach this did not imply a religious perspective or the deification of nature. Yet although Bakunin follows Feuerbach in his naturalism, and is not, unlike Kant and Marx an anthropocentric thinker, McLaughlin does suggest that there is an anti-ecological strain in Bakunin's thought, when, for instance, he writes that humans can and should conquer and master nature (231). But it is also important to recognize that Bakunin was influenced - like Kropotkin - by Darwin's evolutionary biology, and thus conceived of nature as a kind of evolutionary process, which ought not to be equated with the myth of progress. Thus human sociality and consciousness is seen by Bakunin as a natural development, and he denied any dualism between humans and nature, which was intrinsic to Cartesian mechanistic philosophy (Morris 1993:79) What of course was significant about Darwin's evolutionary philosophy is that it introduced and emphasized the crucial importance of openness, chance, creativity, and the subjective agency and individuality of all organisms in the evolutionary process.

As said, all this is lost on those theological detractors of Bakunin in the pages of "Freedom". Surprisingly, McLaughlin has little discussion of Darwin or evolutionary theory.

What is perplexing and frustrating about McLaughlin's study is that it contains some fifty pages of footnotes. Valuable for reference purposes, these footnotes include long, substantial and interesting discussions of many topics that could usefully have been incorporated into the main text. Indeed another section or chapter on the political aspects of Bakunin's philosophy could well have been created from the footnotes, and thus enhanced the study. These topics include the following: Bakunin's critique of the state and all forms of government, including Marx's notion of a state "administered" society, which Bakunin, with some

prescience saw as only leading to some form of despotism (80); Bakunin's federalist principle, which implied that the organization of social life from below, although it is significant that McLaughlin denies that Bakunin was an anarcho-syndicalist (232); and, finally, Bakunin's advocacy of true communism, which implied the unity of freedom and equality, which Bakunin continually emphasized, and which was expressed in the well-known phrase: "Liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice, and...socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality"

As McLaughlin denoted, liberal critics like Berlin and Pyziur denigrate Bakunin's socialism, while Marxists repudiate the libertarian aspects of Bakunin's political philosophy: in essence, of course, Bakunin was a libertarian socialist.

Bakunin was an heir, as McLaughlin argues, to the Enlightenment tradition, at least in its radical aspects, a tradition, stemming from Spinoza and Diderot, which suggests that through secular reason and empirical knowledge, and through political struggle, humans could create a better world - one in which liberty, equality and fraternity could be fully manifested. Like his radical contemporaries Marx and Kropotkin, Bakunin was unduly optimistic regarding the coming revolution - but to blame "reason" for the ills of the twentieth century seems to me to be completely facile. Equally, to describe Bakunin as a "modernist" is also rather inept, for Bakunin repudiated many of the key aspects of so-called "modernity" - specifically the modern nation state, industrial capitalism, possessive individualism and liberal ideology more generally.

No social anarchist, as far as I am aware, certainly not McLaughlin, treats Bakunin's writings as "holy writ" or with uncritical adulation, for they have long acknowledged that Bakunin's anarchism is complex and full of contradictions. But avoiding the "intoxicated vilification" (58) indulged in by his Marxist and liberal critics, and by some recent correspondents to "Freedom", social anarchists have approached Bakunin with an attitude of critical sympathy, recognizing that Bakunin, for all his faults and foibles, was the first to articulate, through his disputes with Marx, social anarchism as a political philosophy. Thus rather than viewing Bakunin as a misguided romantic bent on violence, or as having an unbalanced mind, he has been described - by for example Peter Marshall - as a man whose search for wholeness was a "bold and inspiring attempt to reclaim one's humanity in an alienated world" (1992:308). McLaughlin, likewise, emphasizes the contemporary relevance and critical significance of Bakunin - both with regard to his dialectical naturalism as a philosophy, and his social anarchism as a political vision.

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letters

Access denied

Dear Organise!
There I was at my local library (Newport). I decided to have a look on our website to see what was happening. So I tapped in afed.org.uk only to be greeted with a page saying *Access Denied to crime and intolerance*! The anger began to fill me as I kept trying to get to our site only to be greeted with the same Access Denied; to me and to humanity it should have read 'Freedom Denied'
I gathered my thoughts and noticed in the top left hand corner was the company Gear with a registered trademark. So off I went on the hunt for this company. It did not take me long and surprise surprise it was a multinational company with companies in 15 odd countries. I found the British company and here are its details:
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Symantec UK Ltd
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How many other libraries have this censorship? By the way the BNP has a loverly colourful accessible website. Who decides what goes in and what is censored - Big Brother? Try our libraries and we can see how far this cancer has spread
David, Gwent Anarchists

Shabby response

Dear Organise!
I have to register my discontent with the shabby way you responded to Frankie Dee's criticisms in a recent issue.
Being something of a history buff, I have read Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionist and Year One of the Russian Revolution and Arshinov's History of the Makhnovist Movement. Both writers vividly convey eyewitness accounts of the turbulence of the Russian Revolution from critical perspectives; Arshinov is explicitly critical of the Bolsheviks and their treatment of anarchists, whilst Serge sings their praises and condemns the anarchists who didn't support Lenin and Co. As such, their works are useful- especially Serge's painful decline from something of an anarchist into a cringing supporter of Bolshevik statecraft. Be that as it may, I have to agree with Frankie in questioning the relevance of their works to the practice of contemporary anarchism, which is not the same as suggesting that they be "airbrushed out of anarchist history". And it's dishonest of you to bring up Makhno, since Frankie said nothing about him in his letter.
Your assertion (hinted at in brackets- nicely subtle) that Arshinov, since he was "executed by Stalin" was not "some anarchist-turned Bolshevik" is patently absurd. First the phrase "executed by Stalin in 1937" is clearly a reference to the era of the famous Moscow Show Trials and Purges. Who were the so-called Enemies of he People who were executed by the Soviet Union? Bolsheviks, of course! Second, nobody knows what actually happened to Arshinov upon his return to the Soviet Union. There is a very high probability that he was indeed executed, but there is no evidence I'm aware of to prove that he was "executed by Stalin" personally or through an order. Maybe the editors of Organise! know something the rest of us don't?
As to the problems with the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, they are not based on- despite your silly dismissal- "fairly arcane matters". The trouble with the ABCF from its inception- and glaringly obvious to anyone who actually bothered to take a look- was their tendency to privilege Marxist-Leninist and Third World nationalist prisoners while virtually ignoring (when not denouncing) anarchist prisoners. For some anarchist prisoners and those who have supported them since before the appearance of the ABCF, the "Anarchist" in the name of their franchise seems a cruel joke. That such absurdities take place through (ab)using the name of an organisation with a much better history adds insult to injury.
LJ (Berkeley, California)

An Organise editor replies:
For someone who calls themselves something of a history buff, you seem to have a dislike of history. The Serge review debunked Serge's reputation as a "libertarian Bolshevik", one of the myths that are being currently peddled. Should we refuse to review books of interest? Especially when we also used that review to sharply criticise the individualist anarchism that Serge had once supported, and that in different forms still may do damage to modern anarchism? Arshinov's critiques of Bolshevism are still relevant, because unfortunately Bolshevism hasn't gone away. Many old Bolsheviks were eradicated by Stalin (I doubt if he ever shot anyone personally) but there was a wholesale butchering of other opponents of Stalin, including those who had already spent years in prison. Amongst these was the anarchosyndicalist veteran Yarchuk., who had also recently returned to the Soviet Union. As far as we are aware, according to historians like Avrich, Arshinov was executed for "attempting to reintroduce anarchism to the Soviet Union".
As regards the ABCF, yes, this editor is fully prepared to admit you are right on that question. The AF has been critical of the ABCF on prior occasions. See, for example, Organise! 50, where we wrote about them embracing Maoist ideology - http://flag.blackened.net/af/org/issue50/quiet.html

Have you got a letter for *Organise!*?

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revolutionary portraits: Marinus van der Lubbe

We continue our series, Revolutionary Portraits, on the lives of those women and men who have done so much over the last 120 years to build the anarchist movement.

Marinus van der Lubbe was born on 13th January 1911 in Leyden, Holland, the son of a travelling salesman, Franciscus Cornelis and of Petronella van Handel, a divorced woman who already had 6 children. His father left home for good shortly after his birth. His mother, a chronic asthmatic moved to Den Bosch to set up a little shop. Marinus, it seems, was briefly put in a home for the education of orphans and poor children. One of his teachers described him at the age of 11 as being a gifted pupil .
After the death of his mother in 1921 he lived with his half-sister, at Oegstgeest, near Leyden. Enrolled in a Protestant school, he also was charged with looking after his three younger nieces. He began to work at the age of 14, to take the pressure off of his half-sister. He worked as an apprentice mason and took evening courses. As the result of discussions with his workmates he began to interest himself in revolutionary ideas and joined the youth organisation of the Dutch Communist Party, De Zaaier (The Sower). Of an independent nature and resentful towards authority, as a young autodidact he frequented the public library of Leyden where he read Philosophy and Work of Henry Ford, Marx's Capital and several books about travels through Tibet and China, among other books.
In 1924 he had a work accident on a building site. Two of his workmates as a practical joke upturned a bucket over his head. Quicklime at the bottom of the bucket got in his eyes and he had to be treated in hospital. In October 1927, following the fall of rubble on another site, he was injured in the right eye. This second more serious accident, meant that he spent several months in hospital. He was operated on without recovering the full use of his eye. As a result of this, he received a weekly handicap benefit. To supplement this allowance, he worked in one temporary job after the other. He worked in a grocer's, then as a waiter at the station café in Leyden, sailor on a boat between Noordwijk and Sassenheim, before selling potatoes in the street. Of an athletique constitution, Marinus kept fit through swimming. His friends nicknamed him "Dempsey" after the famous American boxer.

An intransigent activist of the Young Communist League, he was targeted by the police as a result of his interventions at public meetings. His brother in law, who disapproved of his politics, advised him to leave Leyden.
Marinus set up in a furnished room whose rent he shared with Piet van Albada, an oppositionist within the Communist Party, who was close to the Internationalists of the GIC (Groups of Internationalist Communists). This group adhered to ideas of council communism.
Marinus made a short voyage on foot and by hitch-hiking across Belgium and Germany. He went to Calais, where he had the idea of swimming the Channel. In October, In Leyden, he rented a space which he turned into a meeting room for the Young Communist League, which he called Lenin House. He wrote leaflets and bulletins, intervening in strikes, demonstrations of the unemployed and public meetings. By 1929, his disagreements with the Communist Party led him to resign four times! He criticised the leadership for its timorous and bureaucratic outlook, and began to have doubts about the use of parliament which diverted the energy of militants. Influenced by van Albada and his friends, he drew closer to council communist positions.

Turning point
1931 marked a turning point for him. His enthusiasm for travel widened his outlook. He had a strong desire to visit the Soviet Union which he still regarded as the "country of socialism".He was concerned by the rise of fascism in Germany, and felt that unrelenting struggle against its rise was diverted by electoral tactics that he regarded as superficial. In April, with his friend Henk Holwerda, he planned a journey across Europe to Russia, to be financed by the sale of propaganda postcards en route. The Leyden branch of the Communist Party refused to help him with this, Holwerda backed out and Marinus broke with the Party forever.
He undertook the journey regardless, arriving in Berlin and presenting himself to the Soviet consulate. But the sum asked for his visa was too much for his budget, and he started back to Holland. At Gronau on the border he was arrested for illegal sale of postcards and "communist propaganda". Freed after 10 days in jail, he finally got back to Leyden.
During the summer he returned to Calais , where he worked as a navvy. His plan to swim the Channel, for which a Dutch paper had offered a prize of 5,000 florins was thwarted by the very bad weather. In September he went on the road again through Germany. He slept in peasants' houses and in the public refuges for the unemployed. At Budapest he fell in love with a young prostitute and asked her to give up her profession to share her life with him. He was turned down. He got as far as Belgrade, working on the land at each stage and writing a travel log. Returning to Holland, he went to Enschede, where

Continued overleaf

wildcat strikes had broken out in the textile industry. He wrote an account of these strikes for the GIC. With no seasonal work available, he applied for funds from the Bureau of Aid to the Unemployed at Leyden. He applied for assistance to set up a library for workers and unemployed . The Bureau refused to finance such "social projects". In January 1932 after a second attempt to obtain funds was turned down, he broke the windows of the Bureau and was sentenced to three months in prison. To escape this, he travelled to Budapest and in April the Polish police caught him attempting to cross the border to Russia. Returning to Holland he was arrested and imprisoned at the Hague. On his release, he again asked for funds from the Bureau, was rejected, and went on hunger strike. He won his case after 11 days of this. A little later, he published a paper for the unemployed, Werkloozenkrant, which advocated self-organisation and direct action and ferociously criticising the union bureaucracies.

He became friends with Eduard Sirach, who had led a revolt on the cruiser Zeven Provincien in 1917 and who was active in a council communist group in Leyden.the LAO.-Workers Left Opposition, which published Spartacus. Involving himself in their activities, he was often in the thick of agitation. During the drivers strike at the Hague , he intervened in the mass meetings, criticising the Communist Party and the unions, and advocating workers autonomy. By now, 1933 Marinus had contracted tuberculosis of the eyes and spent several weeks in hospital. This young man of 24 realised that he had a strong risk of losing his eyesight.

Nazi take-over

Following Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Marinus hoped that the millions of German socialists and communists would confront the Nazis and set off a revolution which would spread through the world. He often repeated that something had to be done. A week after leaving hospital, he travelled to Berlin, arriving there on the 17th February. Attending a meeting of the Social-Democrat Party, he was shocked to see a brutal interruption by the police was not resisted. He incited people to react, started discussions in the street, and tried to intervene at meetings. Everywhere he met resignation and indifference. On the 23rd February, he attended a Communist Party meeting, which was again broken up by the police with no resistance.

Disheartened by this, and seeing no reaction to fascism among the workers, he decided to act.

On the night of 25th February he tried to burn down an unemployment office and a castle and the Imperial Palace in Berlin. On the 27th he succeeded in burning down the Reichstag, the German parliamentary building, and was apprehended there. This was the flimsy pretext for a closing down of political organisations and papers and the arrest of thousands of socialists, communists and anarchists.

Indeed, the Nazis put him on trial with a leader of the German Communist Party and some Bulgarian Communists, who they accused of working in league with Marinus! He denied any link and stated that he had acted on his own.

He undertook a hunger strike in prison to protest his conditions of detention, and was forcibly fed. He was chained up for 7 months in his cell. Eventually the Bulgarians were acquitted, the Communist leader imprisoned and Marinus sentenced to death. On the 10th January 1934, he was beheaded in the prison of Leipzig

The second death of Van der Lubbe

The Communists set up a committee for aid to the victims of Hitlerism after the Reichstag event. It was directed by Munzenberg, acting for the Komintern, the Communist International controlled by Stalin. It described Marinus as a pseudo-communist and a Nazi agent provocateur. In August 1933, it published the Brown Book, edited by Otto Katz, who accused Marinus of being "petty bourgeois" "bragger" , a religious maniac, and finally of being a toy boy for the leaders of the SA, the Nazi Brownshirt stormtroopers!! He was described as a "a semi-blind young pederast" and accused of acting with the Nazis in the Reichstag burning. A "counter-trial" in London organised by this committee backed up these findings, with only one person on the jury, Sylvia Pankhurst the anti-parliamentary communist, strongly objecting. In open court the Bulgarian Communist Dimitrov (after his acquittal a top dog in the Comintern) demanded that his co-defendant be sentenced to death for having "worked against the proletariat".

Council communists and anarchists in Holland and France sprang to his defence (with the exception of the German anarchist veteran Rudolf Rocker, who accepted the Brown Book accusations) In France, the anarchist theorist Andre Prudhommeaux set up the Marinus van der Lubbe Committee. On the day of the opening of the trial, the Red Book, a refutation of all the slanders of the Brown Book, was published in Holland (and reprinted in extracts in France) it defended Van der Lubbe's revolutionary integrity, with many character references from people in different political groups attesting to his honesty and devotion to the working class. But the slander continued. The Communist playwright Bertold Brecht, in his the Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, an allegory on Hitler's rise, has a character called Fish, a caricature of Marinus, whose sole words are "areu, areu, areu". Despite various attempts to clear his name, a bad odour still surrounds the life of Van der Lubbe. At best he is seen as a cretin, or a half-mad idiot. He was as much a victim of the Stalinists as he was of the Nazis.

Marinus acted for the best of motives. He thought his deed might be the spark for a general workers uprising against the Nazis. Alas, he was to be very wrong. The Social Democrats and their unions gave up without a fight, as did the Communists. Only in Vienna in June 1933 did the workers attempt to rise up, to be bloodily crushed. But the Nazis would have carried out their wholesale repression, sooner or later, with or without the Reichstag fire. On the day that Marinus saw the Communist meeting being broken up, the Communist Party HQ had been raided, and the offices of their paper closed.

And Munzenberg and Katz? Munzenberg was murdered by the Stalinists, whose bidding he had done, and his body dumped on the Swiss border in 1940. Otto Katz carried on his work for the Soviet secret services, taking part in the hunting down of socialists and anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, before the death machine whose loyal servant he was, turned on him too. He was tried in Prague and hung as a "Zionist agent" in 1952.

"…old formulas and old ideas are in the process of dying, and with them fall into decay the parties and corporative organisations and all of that. The world counts on new forces, which are the heads and the hearts of the workers themselves." From the unemployed paper edited by Van der Lubbe.

aims and principles

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

WANT TO JOIN THE AF? WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

- ○ I agree with the AF's Aims and Principles and I would like to join the organisation.
- ○ I would like more information about the Anarchist Federation.
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FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

What's all the fuss about the G8?

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*The Anarchist Federation is a member organisation of the international of Anarchist Federations – www.iaf-ifa.org

The election and after

One of the most striking things about the last election was its low-key nature; very few canvassers, very few window-posters, and a general disinterest. If the number of people who voted went up slightly from the previous election, it would be possible to think it was because some decided to vote to punish the Labour government for the war.

This general disinterest reveals a deep discontent with parliamentary democracy. This discontent is not expressed in struggle or in action. It is a general disillusionment in the political process, and stews and simmers because of the lack of any credible alternative.

The reduced minority of Labour may or may not lead to the ousting of Blair within the next few months. The Brown faction is supported by the trade union bosses, who would prefer Brown as leader in order to repair the damage caused by Blair's policies. But a push for power by Brown, backed by the union bureaucrats would mean no difference in the politics of the Labour Party. Brown is as much an architect of New Labour as Blair. He was the main actor in the drive to cut public sector jobs and to attack pensions. He is as much responsible for installing the layer of quangocrats, spin-doctors, and lawyers in the upper ranks of Labour as Blair. Any cosmetic changes cannot hide the fact that behind the Brown makeup will be the same policies as before, policies that are authoritarian and anti-working class.

The Labour regime threatens to continue its attacks with the fast-tracking of ID cards. This is one issue where anarchists need to mobilise. The "promise" to withdraw the proposed attacks on pensions supposedly won by trade union leaders will be quickly reneged on, now that the election is over. As we said in the previous Organise! Editorial, this is another issue that anarchists need to mobilise around.

The disillusionment in the whole political process, and what appears to be mass apathy and no expectations for a radical alternative, does not mean we should throw up our hands and give up. On the contrary, as we have so often repeated, what is needed is hard work from anarchist revolutionaries to create new social movements and radical alternatives in the neighbourhood and workplace.

Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 31st August 2005. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

T/SOR/16/33

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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what's all the fuss about the g8?

The forthcoming Summit of the Group of Eight (or G8 to it's enemies), to be held in the Scottish golf resort of Gleneagles between July 6th and 8th, has stimulated opposition in a number of political areas. This article looks at the what's in store for the world's leaders this summer.

First, what exactly is the G8? The G8 consists of 8 of the most powerful nation states in the world. It has been in existence for over 30 years and its job is to be a forum for policy discussion for the ruling class. It is, however, primarily symbolic and an opportunity to do good PR with the media and lobbyists. The real decisions are made in other places outside the glare of the media and beyond the protests of the opposition.

Anyone for... golf?

Gleneagles itself is an excellent choice for the state as it is suitably isolated and situated in a rural area with little local political radicalism. The nearest cities are Perth and Stirling, neither of which have a large indigenous left or alternative culture. Opposition and protests have followed the G8 wherever it has met. These protests appeared to have reached both their height and their lowest point when, at the infamous 2001 Genoa events, the police killed the activist Carlo Giuliani and beat and tortured Indymedia and other oppositional journalists. Since then, however, there has been massive opposition at the G8 summit at Evian, France in June 2003 and this year's summit is far from going unopposed.

The opposition

Who, then, is leading the opposition to the G8 and why? The organised and mobilising opposition can be divided into three currents. The largest of these is the Make

Poverty History coalition.

Make Poverty History - Jesuits, union bureaucrats and the Boys Brigade?

When the G8 last came to Britain, in Birmingham in 1998, the main mobilisation was by those calling for debt relief. In this, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), charities and church groups were at the forefront and the left had a minimal profile. Though in Britain at this time groups such as Reclaim the Streets were regularly organising creative protests and street parties,the international 'anti-globalisation' and 'anti-capitalist' movements were yet to play a significant role. The descendants of that mobilisation today are the Make Poverty History coalition. This coalition, which makes no pretence of being anti-capitalist, wishes to pressurise world leaders into cancelling the debt of the 'developing' world. Make Poverty History span the entire spectrum of lobbying politics and unite the Baptist Union with the Jesuits, Islamic Relief with Comic Relief, the TUC and the Boys Brigade. It is holding a march in Edinburgh on the Saturday before the G8 comes to Scotland, a march which will possibly be the largest the country has ever seen. It is at this march that the authorities fear an 'anarchist' bloc, bent on wreaking havoc and destruction, will emerge. But more on media myths later. The main 'radical' and ostensibly anti-capitalist mobilisation takes the form of G8 Alternatives (G8Alt), a coalition involving The Scottish Socialist Party, Scottish CND, Friends of the Earth, World Development Movement, Muslim Association of Britain and others.

SWP front?

G8Alt has been dismissed as a front for the Socialist Workers Party. The truth is somewhat more complex. Rather, the SWP has managed to dominate the coalition from the beginning and maintained control through frenetic activity and paying careful attention to the appearances of open and democratic organisation. Being, in Scotland, no more than a Platform (i.e. a fraction) within the Scottish Socialist Party, it has done this through the branches it dominates and its front organisations such as Globalise Resistance. The rest of the Scottish Socialist Party has been too busy with other campaigns, notably the General Election, to prioritise the G8 and has been willing to allow the legwork to be done by the SWP, despite the unease this may bring. The SWP have thrown themselves in with an eye to recruitment and the building of a power base in Scotland, which up to now has eluded them. The other groups which have affiliated have likewise allowed the SWP to dominate, or have been too small and marginal to affect changes. The Scottish Trade Union Congress, despite the moderation of the G8Alt proposals, has declined to come on board, though a small number of individual union branches have affiliated.

So what are the G8Alt planning?

Other than supporting the Make Poverty History march, the G8Alt is organising a counter-summit in Edinburgh featuring the great and the good of the anti-globalisation/ anti-imperialist movements at the bargain price of £15 entrance fee. It is supporting a demonstration outside the Dungavel Detention centre in solidarity with asylum seekers and refugees and it is supporting a blockade of Faslane nuclear submarine base called by Scottish CND and Trident Ploughshares. It is also sponsoring a day of 'direct action' at Gleneagles itself. This day of direct action so far consists of a no more than a traditional march and demonstration, which they calculate will be about 20,000 strong. This demonstration, scheduled for Wednesday 7th July, coincides with the day of action around Climate Change called by People's Global Action. This day of action is being supported by the third oppositional current, the Dissent Network of resistance against the G8.

Dissent: a network of resistance?

The Dissent network, formed in the Autumn of 2003, is an informal network of broadly libertarian local groups, including London's WOMBLES, Cardiff Anarchist Network, several social centres and specific 'working groups'. It describes itself as " a mechanism for communication between local groups and working groups involved in building resistance to the G8 and capitalism in general. It hopes to exist long after the world leaders have returned home..." (Dissent statement in 'Days of Dissent' pamphlet October 2004. The network is open to anyone accepting the hallmarks of Peoples' Global action, itself a network, formed in 1998, international in scope and involving a diverse range of anti-globalisation groups and social movements including the Zapatistas, the Brazilian landless peasants movement and European 'autonomists'. The PGA's hallmarks commit it to a rejection of capitalism, patriarchy, religious fundamentalism and racism and to embrace a "confrontational attitude" calling for "direct action and civil disobedience" and an organisational philosophy based on "decentralisation and autonomy" (from PGA Hallmarks). So the PGA is an implicitly libertarian organisation, though not one in the tradition of class struggle anarchism Dissent are mobilising for the pre-G8 march, for the Faslane action (Trident Ploughshares are participating in both G8Alt and Dissent) as well as for the Climate Change day of action. To this end they are planning various innovative and creative ways to blockade the summit and disrupt the free-flow of hot air therein. These tactics may include approaches to the Gleneagles area via the local hills with an army of revolutionary ramblers. A People's Golfing Action network of "anarchist golfers" may appear, complimenting the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Army planned. Beyond these humorous and media-friendly approaches the Dissent network has been trying to establish a Convergence Space somewhere in rural Perthshire or Stirlingshire, where the many activists committed to direct action as well as discussion might gather. Dissent has also taken legal support, medical support and international activist training seriously. This has lead sections of the media in Scotland to paint Dissent as the likely organisers of a fearsome anarchist Black Bloc of professional rioters. There are certainly some on the left aping these tactics.

The good, the bad and the Black Bloc

Relations between G8Alt and the Dissent network are cool but Dissent supporters have attended the open G8Alt organising meetings and have suggested that the mobilisations organised by G8Alt and Dissent may complement each other and successfully argued that the state must not be allowed to paint one group of protesters 'good' and the other 'bad' in a divide and rule tactic. Whether this level of unity in diversity holds is another question. The security for the G8 events will affect local residents considerably and it is likely that people in nearby Auchterarder will be virtual prisoners in their own village. Local activists, including CND in Stirling have been subject to low-level police harassment for several months.

Media hysteria

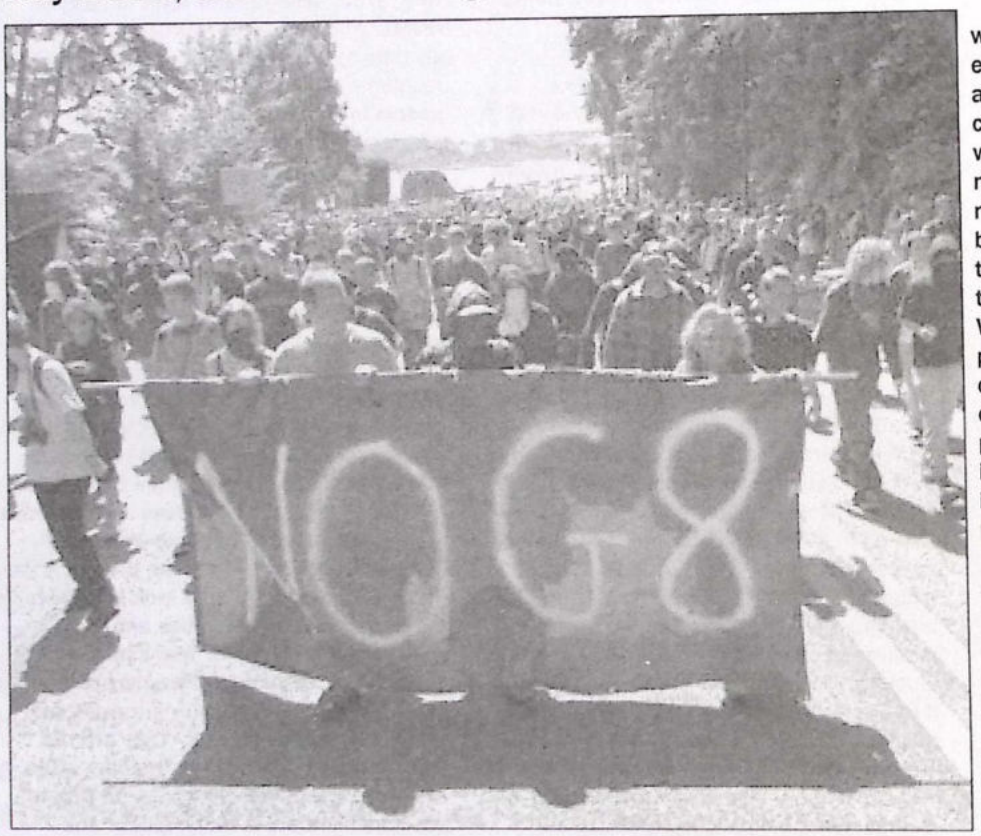
Sections of the media have attempted to whip up a low-level hysteria that focuses upon the possibility of 'anarchist' violence and the spectre of the 'Black bloc'. Water cannon and tear gas are expected to be deployed if confrontation does take place and threats of live ammunition being used have been leaked to the press in an obvious attempt to intimidate people wanting to take direct action. One of the problems with the Dissent network is the lack of grassroots organisation in communities and workplaces in Scotland. Many (though not all) of the English based Dissent activists are highly mobile, perhaps only intermittently involved in local struggles. They are the infamous summit-hoppers, heading off to where the perceived 'action' is. In Dissent publications there is much talk of anti-capitalist movement but little focus on where the dynamic for such a movement might come from. The Dissent network seems to rarely look beyond the activist milieu of which it is a part. Although it talks of leaving behind a stronger ant-capitalist movement following the G8 protests, it isn't clear how this might come about.

So, come July the stage is set for massive protest, considerable hot air and some creative direct action. Anarchist communists from all over Europe and beyond will be there, part of a class struggle red and black contingent (not bloc!) and supporting effective direct action. But, more importantly perhaps, they must be there when the circus has left town and the day to day effects that the likes of the G8 create remain to be fought. Less media-friendly, probably less exciting but ultimately more important.

For more info see www.dissent.org.uk

a look at the libertarian mobilisation against the g8 in evian

France, June 2003. Evian, a small middle class town in the foothills of the Alps, welcomes the G8, the summit of the most powerful in the world. Scotland, July 2005, the G8 meets again.



This article revisits the libertarian mobilisation in France in Evian against the G8 summit by examining the actions of two collectives, the CLAAAC (Collective of Anti-authoritarian and Anti-capitalist struggles) and the VAAAG (Anti-capitalist, anti-war, alternative village) that took place between May 27th and June 3rd.

Why did the mobilisation take these forms?

The motivations for the libertarian mobilisation are numerous. First of all, we were not satisfied by a confrontation with the police and a unitary demonstration where the political message is superfluous and where it is difficult to see why (with what political project) we are coming together. In this case anarchists are found united with leftists, 'citizen' groups, NGOs and reformists under the umbrella of 'anti-globalisation'. The aim was therefore to make anarchist political ideas and practices visible at the G8 events by using a new way of presenting ourselves. We wanted to created a clear pole of resistance that was anti-capitalist yet at the same time involved organising an experiment in self-organisation that we would be open to everyone and where everyone would find his/her place. This project was realised through the organisation of a village that was not only a camp site but that was also a social and political space, where self-management was put into practice as much in the preparations as in the few days of its life.

The village also gave us the opportunity to see a variety of alternative forms of struggle, imagined or already existing, against the capitalist system. This was possible thanks to the discussions and presentations that were organised around alternative experiences of struggle around the world and that offered the opportunity to have a collective reflection on the state of society in which capitalism and the State produce nothing but perpetual war, inequality and misery. We hoped that this initiative would bring people together who are living and/or thinking of how to create a real alternative to capitalism.

We used the calendar of the summits of the powerful to create a moment of anti-capitalist political demonstrations and to construct a project that showed the possibility of an alternative society. For this, it is necessary that libertarians and their ideas are visible and distinctive from the professionals of the 'citizen' and Leftist movements who simply find capitalism too savage for their taste and do not question the fundamental basis of the system. It is for this reason that we chose to have these two initiatives, the CLAAAC and the VAAAG, as the focus of the anarchist movement.

What was the VAAAG?

This village, the idea of which was launched by No Pasaran (an anti-fascist group), was organised by a number of local collectives around most everywhere in France and also in Germany by people who are active in the French Anarchist Federation, No Pasaran, syndicalists and trade unionists, people attached to the autonomous movement and individuals without a label. These collectives worked for five months to think about and put into practice the VAAAG, from the logistics (material for marquees and tents, mobilisation of other necessary resources and skills, food, getting the land) to the elaboration of the Charter of the village (that would guide the self-managed functioning). All of this was down collectively, though regular meetings. The collectives also set up canteens that were to be the central points of every neighbourhood in the future village. The VAAAG was self-financed through fund-raising, forbidding any commercial activities in the village. Participants could stay and eat for free with only modest drink prices.

The village was then constructed at Annemasse, near Evian, and opened for the week of mobilisations against the G8 summit.
The VAAAG consisted of thousands of people participating in routines of a collective, libertarian life based on solidarity and equality that were self-organised through daily assemblies where everyone could participate in decisions and share out tasks. All of this took place in the 'barrios' or neighbourhoods that were organised around the canteens. At the centre of VAAAG was a bakery, a radio, medical post etc as well as a space for bars and concerts. The political content of the village, apart from the debates and discussions, consisted of various stands and booths with newspapers, pamphlets, books and magazines, where people could learn more about the ideas and practices of the anarchist movement. These activities gave people from diverse backgrounds to both clarify and reflect on what they had in common. It is this that is interesting- to meet, to exchange ideas, to create and to live a constructive and positive experience.
This was the occasion to actually realise our political idea of self-organisation, which is often evoked but unfortunately ignored. It was not only political militants that were involved but also those who only had a little political experience. It also permitted us to reach the 'man and woman in the street' of Annemasse who are watching the TV and fearing the advance of the anti-globalisation 'hordes' arriving in their precious town. They came and they saw, and began to understand and appreciate our manner of functioning and our values; another possibility is finally being sketched out. We were able to use this village experiment to make the idea of a self-managed and anti-capitalist alternative seem credible.
We can actually talk of a real experiment in self-management and organisation and it was a success. It succeeded thanks to the preparatory work done by around a hundred people, both practical and political, and because of the way that the participants took control of the village during the week of mobilisation and made it work by accepting the charter and making the village come to life. These were the elements that permitted this experiment to succeed: organisation, both in the preparation and spontaneously, on the basis of communality and solidarity that had been clearly defined together.

And the action of CLAAAC?

The CLAAAC federated organisations such as the French Anarchist Federation, the Organisation of Libertarian Communists, No Pasaran amongst others, associations, unions such as the CNT and anarchist organisations from abroad, around a common political platform against the G8. The whole libertarian movement, united in a 'red and black' block of around 5-7000 people for the demonstration on June 1st, showed that the anarchist movement is a significant force in the current political and social landscape. This block allowed for an independent political and syndicalist pole, which was anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, anti-patriarchal and revolutionary, within the reformist anti-globalisation movement of NGOs and others who just want to make capitalism more humane. The demonstration is likely to have remained in the heads of many of those who participated in this important event.
In terms of political action, there were of course blockades and joint actions with the Swiss demonstrators. The link between the VAAAG and the CLAAAC facilitated the organisation of direct action, blockades of the routes into Evian and political actions such as the impromptu protest against the Socialist Party. These actions were undertaken by those who wanted to, respecting those who did not participate in the context of excessive security put into place by the French State, which meant that the level of violence and repression became more of a focus than we would have liked.
This event, this mobilisation against the G8, was a moment of direct communication and of creativity that reinforced the anarchist movement. We were able to develop federal structures on a common political platform with common objectives. Through our actions, both in VAAAG and in CLAAAC, we were able to show that not only are we a force to be reckoned with but we also offer a social alternative based on self-management. We have made progress in envisaging and putting into practice our ideals of self-organisation and autonomy in our struggles, functioning and practices. The power of the libertarian movement lies in our capacity to go from resistance to the creation of social alternatives. This is what was brought into being during those days in May-June 2003. Struggle, resist, create!

*This article was written for Organise! by Sophie, a comrade from the French Anarchist Federation in Chambery. It has been translated from the French as literally as possible in order to retain the meaning. As a result, it may read a little awkwardly

Organise! comment

In other articles in this issue of Organise!, we have taken more of a critical look at anti-G8 mobilisations. This contribution shows how these events can be extremely positive. However, the mobilisation should not so much be judged in terms of how effective it is in actually stopping the G8 summit or in how many battles with the police took place. Rather, it should be judged in terms of how effective we have been in spreading anarchist ideas and practices. In addition, as Sophie argues, a key aspect of the mobilisations should be showing both ourselves and others that it is possible to organise and live differently, without relying on hierarchal structures and leaders, whether formal or informal.

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social centres & the g8: boxer or benjamin?

How do radical social centres view the G8 mobilisation and the relationship of mass protest to their own, local campaigns? The AF attempted to find out

In this edition we hoped to bring you a full survey of responses from social centres and related groups across Britain to the G8 Summit, their views of the current condition of the anti-globalisation movement and how worldwide movements and ideas impact on local actions and campaigns. It proved tougher than we thought so this article, based on just five out of thirteen possible replies and some comments by individuals, is by its nature subjective and incomplete. Nevertheless, we hope some insight will come out of it.

Social centres are places where individual activists can come together to develop common aims and agendas, to co-operate around issues and campaigns of common interest, trying to build *local* critical masses that can challenge local elites and politics. As collective and organisational anarchists we believe that temporary and conditional co-operation by individualists and autonomists, such as may be found in single issue campaigning or temporary autonomous zones, are important and have positive outcomes. But can social centres become the seeds of a more permanent and focussed 'unity of ideas' and purpose which could *really* challenge the ruling class, our political elites? How far can they go to form a new society in the carcass of the old, or to help overthrow capitalism? After all, there are dozens of local 'social forums' around the country, places where people come together to debate issues, raise awareness and plan campaigns and actions without the added burden of creating and maintaining a (semi-) permanent physical place that is *ours* and which acts as a *focus* for discontent. Given that the social centres provide a more stable base for reaching their local communities, and collective activity in general, might those people at the heart of this movement have different perspectives on the G8 mobilisation and protests like it compared to individual activists?

The survey attempted to probe whether there was any kind of developing consensus on the role of protest. Or whether the lessons we learned from such protest could be applied locally, *amplifying* the ability of the social centre to challenge capitalism and the state, or if such events changed or focussed local agendas in particular ways. The answers we got were thought provoking. The first and most striking response was the view that some social centres did not have a consensus view of such questions. How social centres should respond to the G8 and the relationship of symbolic or ritualised protest to the ethos and functioning of social centres provoked a mixed response. This lack of any unified view was echoed in the different opinions expressed about social centres as a whole. One activist said her/his local social centre "is simply an extension or continuation of what is always happening" and went on to say "it would be impossible, or a waste of time at best, to try to get some kind of consensus answer to such questions". Stated categorically, the fact that a social centre exists does not *create* any collective consciousness or joint activity arising from that consciousness. This is one extreme. Of course diversity and inclusiveness is a pre-condition for the creation and operation of social centres and autonomists see it as a strength, based on their own experience and of the new activist movements they have observed. As a result, though, some social centres - but not all - remain simply spaces that individuals or campaigning groups create and *use* without them being anything more, a place where a co-operative and consensual society is developing, for instance. Are social centres,

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then, merely reactive, taking up the issues and campaigns of people who walk through the door but not having any longer-term perspective or developing a *programme* intended to confront the state in a coherent way?

The second was the extent to which some social centres appeared to be dominated by 'activist-ism' and were difficult to sustain. That same activist said, "I see very little on-going hard slog local work or campaigning as most people seem to skip from one exciting thing to the next. Ongoing projects always seem to suffer from low energy and involvement while people start yet more new things; always re-inventing and duplicating". Our own knowledge of, say, the Bradford 1 in 12 Club or the now-closed Red & Black Centre in Sheffield would confirm this. Yet if we look in detail at, say, the Sumac Centre in Nottingham, Kebele in Bristol, the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh or RISC in Reading the reverse is the case, with strong on-going campaigns and services underpinning single-issue campaigning or short-term actions and protests, with much intermingling of people and exchanges of ideas.

Thirdly, and happily, social centres take the injunction 'think global, act local' very much to heart. Virtually all saw a definite link between the issues we will be taking to the G8 and those that affect us all locally: privatisation and casualisation, anti-war, climate change and so on. These issues were empowering and provided a coherent bundle of ideas around which to come together, co-operate and mobilise. We did not ask a question like "To what extent are such issues *important* to the people you live and work amongst?" since that wasn't the point of the survey. We were seeking instead the view of social centre activists of the relevance of symbolic protest to what they do. At an extreme, one activist expressed the fear that we could be nothing more than "middle-class white kids playing at revolutionaries while actually doing little more than pissing, smug in our 'party and protest' ghetto". Happily, more responses were at the other end of the spectrum. One said such protest was "integrated to my own work. It is my work" and advocated "undermining the global economic system [by] personal actions such as non-financial exchange, own grown food, buying locally or fairtrade". The personal is political, the local can indeed be global. One centre had moved closer to its 'community' and as a result had begun "hosting meetings to fight post office and swimming pool closures, local anti-fascist meetings, becoming a space for food hygiene courses and gardening workshops for disadvantaged schools in the area where the centre is based, providing a cheap bar and café where you can encounter local and national radical literature, catering on local demos, collection point for food for asylum-seekers" and so on. It's a picture that closely resembles the *sindicos* of the Spanish anarchists (which had a revolutionary potential) but also many community and trade union centres (which are primarily welfarist and reformist).

What G8 protest meant locally displayed a similar pattern of divergent responses. For some their response to G8 was ritualistic and logistical; it was about getting there, doing what had to be done and coming home again. For some it was a 'distraction', for others re-energising but with the danger of deflation longer-term, for still more a means to build closer networks and relationships. But many *did* think they would return stronger in terms of their local campaigns or community work, that such protest was a necessary *extension* of local action even if its effects were chiefly in the here and now and longer-term impacts on policy less difficult to predict.

Some social centres do have common long-term political aims that provide common purpose and a unifying spirit. Others simply 'enable' political and campaigning work to occur but without themselves possessing an agenda which is consciously pursued. We're aware, of course, of centres that have collapsed or closed precisely because the core or founding group felt they were being overworked by 'the movement', people who did the exciting stuff but not the 'shit work'. And because they can be sometimes merely 'spaces' or 'zones' where things happen (or don't), there is very little practical or purposeful solidarity, merely association. Some people do some stuff together and some people don't or do other things.

The social centres and their network are important, of course, it's why we keep trying to set more and more up! They develop the organisational and practical skills of people who pass through, broadening political discourses and developing association and some solidarity. There can be support and auxiliaries to on-going campaigns, or initiators and focus points of new campaigns. Their strength lies in their permanence; when they are. When levels of mobilization fall, people or issues move on, the social centres carry on, providing a continuity of knowledge, experience, networks, association and just plain people. This enables them to survive but does it enable us to prosper, as a movement?

The Spanish anarchists developed perspectives and a manifesto that struck chords with sections of the working class. They then used their trade unions, political groups, newspapers, town, village and neighbourhood meetings and their sindicos to spread that agenda amongst any who would listen, developing centres and cultures of resistance organically but above all *coherently* and connectedly, making maximum use of the benefits of association and solidarity. This enabled them to push forward with their political agenda and gave them resilience under pressure. But many social centres today don't have any unifying vision, merely aggregates of people, co-operating or not, agreeing or disagreeing. One activist did say "we have to know what alternative system we want and try to live it". Living the alternative [if we can] can offer individual and group solutions but never a solution to the problem of our social relationship to capitalism. More important is the idea that we focus on that 'alternative system', a system that offers global solutions to war, destruction of the planet, oppression and exploitation rather than simple protest and opposition. Until such a politics becomes universal and until we develop unity around a common set of alternative systems we may continue to protest but struggle to progress.

Social centre survey

1. Name of your local centre
2. As a social centre do you participate in national or international protest actions or gatherings e.g. Stop The War, Anti G8, European Social Forum etc?
3. What positive benefits are there in participating in such events and protests?
4. If you participate, what priorities do you take with you? For instance challenging world elites, raising awareness of the issues, solidarity with other protesters etc.
5. To what extent does mass protest at such events challenge or change agendas or affect the pace or direction of change?
6. What is the connection, if any, between participation in such events and your local work and organising?
7. Does the opportunity for protest and the profile it gives our movement and issues significantly benefit local work and campaigning or is it a distraction from local work?
8. Are you planning local actions or activities to coincide with the G8 Summit? If so, what kinds of action/activity?
9. What are the main issues activists will be putting forward in opposition to the G8 that have a local importance or significance?
10. Do you think our protests at such summits and gatherings are having a bigger or smaller impact on corporate or governmental elites?
11. Do you think there are alternatives to such focussed protest or direct action? If so, what are they?

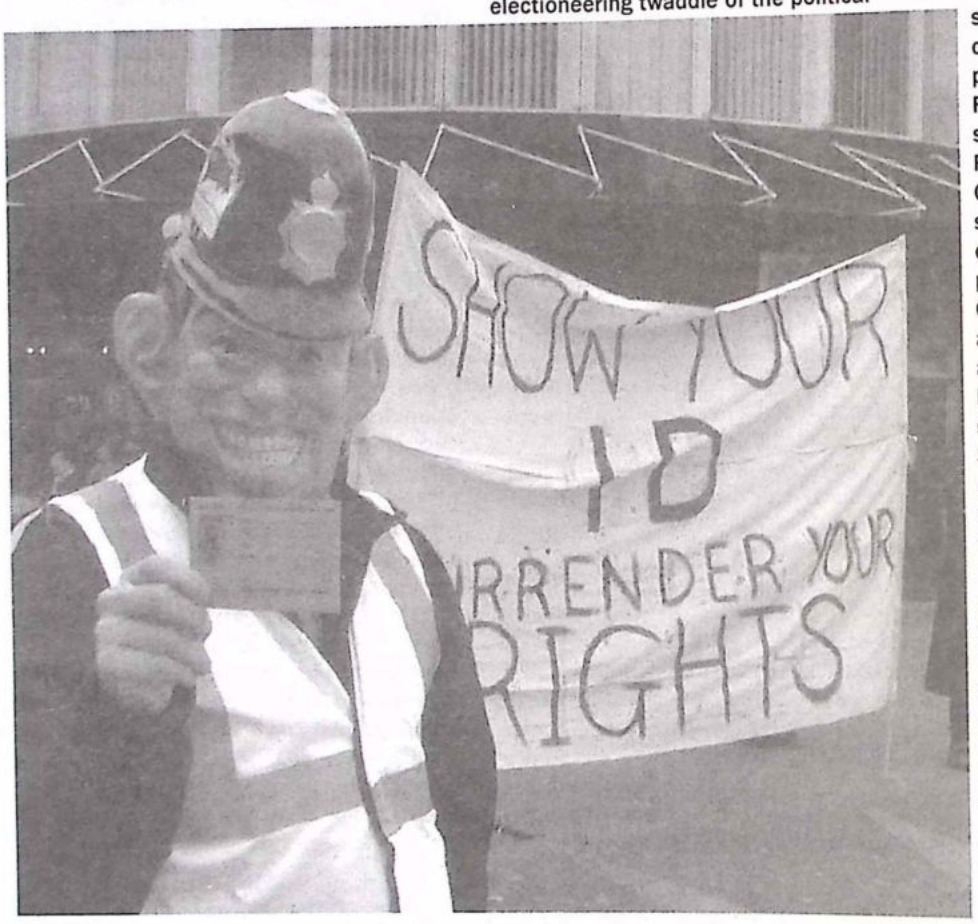
Social Centres and related groups that were sent questionnaires included Kebele, Bristol; rampArts, London; A-Spire, Leeds; RISC, Reading, 1in12, Bradford; Emmas, London; ACE, Edinburgh; Schnews, Brighton; 56a Infoshop, London; Sumac, Nottingham; Okasional Café, Manchester as well as the London ARC.

national id on the cards

The threat of introduction of a National Identity Card Scheme is still an ongoing UK government hot potato and almost an obsession for New Labour. But why?

"Anarchism ... stands for direct action, the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions, economic, social and moral." - Emma Goldman.

This article tries to wade through the mud of post-Sept 11th paranoia and to counter the fear-mongering coming not only through the electioneering twaddle of the political parties but even from anti-ID card campaigns like Liberty's. What we find is an ongoing and consistent commitment to enforced citizenship, which appears to be the real meaning behind the rhetoric.



In the private sector, especially in retail, market research technology has provided the means to help companies 'understand their customers better' thanks to huge databases created from transactions using debit and credit cards and from store loyalty cards, enabling them to target their marketing campaigns and in-store product lines. Soon we'll have widespread use of Radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags that will help them track goods and clothes we are wearing inside and outside of the store with much more sophistication than is currently possible with bar-codes, and even photograph us when we pick up products. For consumer goods then, Big Brother is surely here already (see separate article on RFID in this issue).

On the other hand, the public sector has struggled to keep up in 'understanding its citizens'. To push this forwards the Labour party has actively pursued the idea of e-Government and has attempted to create and computerise a number of systems such as the Inland Revenue and Criminal Records Bureau at great cost with varying degrees of success - the Passport Service and Child Support Agency systems being notable disasters in recent memory. But in spite of the setbacks and huge expense, Labour seems to have the will to see through a multi-billion pound National ID Card Scheme as a semi-public/semi-private initiative via the Whitehall and Industry Group (WIG) who have held events to attract a host of telecoms, security and other hi-tech companies, along with credit-checking agencies and information management consultants (see www.corporatewatch.org). This is all happening while the supposed reasons for needing ID cards are being promoted by the government, and campaigns are up and running to oppose

Fact file

The Identity Cards Bill was passed by MPs at its third reading in February by 224 votes to 64 and is now headed for the House of Lords. Labour looks determined to get compulsory cards in place by 2008, starting by biometrically updating passports and driving licenses and introducing a voluntary card. Even if they don't go all the way in that timescale, the Children's Bill amendment could easily turn into ID cards for everyone as that generation aged - one estimate is 50% of the population within 20 years. Plus, mandatory fingerprinting as well as facial scanning for all passport and travel documents is looking more likely within the EU. The time to fight is now, and even if the Bill goes through it's not over. The Poll Tax came in and was still defeated here, and ID cards were defeated in Australia and elsewhere.

To get involved with Defy-ID, there are many local groups who would love to hear from you (contact details on www.defy-id.org.uk or write to us and we'll put you in touch): Armagh & Down; Bolton; Bradford; Brighton; Bristol; Cambridge; Cheshire; Glasgow; Guilford; Herts (South East); Leeds; Leicester; Lincoln; Liverpool; London (Barnet/Brent); London (Hackney); London (Haringey); Manchester; Norwich; Nottingham; Preston; Sheffield; Stoke on Trent; Worthing.

From the Defy-ID website:

"Defy-ID is not a national membership organisation, it is a network of groups from around the UK. Local groups form the basis for resistance to every stage of the introduction of ID cards and could involve all kinds of campaigning methods. The best way to get involved is to contact your nearest group. If there is not one in your area perhaps you should think of forming one. However, the idea is not necessarily that groups would be formed specifically to protest against the identity card scheme, but also that existing groups could join the Defy-ID network. Such a group might, for example, be a community group, anti-fascist, environmental, animal rights, tenants association or asylum seekers support group."

them. The picture is quite confusing with a host of arguments coming from both sides of the 'debate', and even within the same political parties. Lest we forget, Tories Michael Howard and Peter Lilley failed to introduce ID cards during the Major government. Now as opposition leader Howard is still in favour but Lilley has taken a more right-wing libertarian position. For anarchists, being against loss of personal freedoms could be seen as a given but, as we will see, some of the tactics of anti-ID card campaigning leave a lot to be desired, so it is perhaps worth a closer look.

Reading through the 'Fiction and Fact' mini-booklet response to ID cards from the civil liberties group Liberty you can just imagine their discussions with a social research consultant. What do the stupid Daily Mail reading public care about? Oh yes: Terrorism, Crime, Illegal Immigration, Benefit Cheats, security of their personal information, and having to pay for the Card, so let's organise our anti-ID campaign around the issues and tell them *it won't work*. Tell them how terrorists, bank robbers, rapists and muggers *won't be deterred*, street crime is *just as bad* in countries that have cards, people smugglers will *just forge them*, 90% of benefit frauds *involve the cheat's own identity*. Some of these may be quite true, but talk about playing to people's fears and forgetting about any kind of social solidarity! When Blunkett or Clarke go on about organised crime, terrorists and failed asylum seekers, they are not interested in helping people understand their real agenda, but rather to market their plans using media-friendly sound-bites. By concentrating on this divisive catalogue of political issues (that drop so easily out of the focus-group kinds of methods which are popular for gauging support or otherwise for schemes that affect voting populations), Liberty's campaign misses the point about Labour's long term agenda which is all about social control.

So how can we really understand Labour's love of ID cards and work out how to oppose them effectively and not at the expense of unwarranted fearmongering?

As pointed out by the altogether more sensible Defy-ID campaign (see www.defy-id.org.uk), Labour's ID card bill could rightly be called the 'National Identity Register Bill' since it is more about establishing a national ID database than issuing cards. The database, as currently intended, will contain not just your current name and address and 'biometric' fingerprint or iris scan, but will track and record any address (or name) changes and include your photo, National Insurance number, driving licence number, passport number, immigration number, and the number of 'any designated document not covered by the above'. The database would be open not only to the Immigration service and Police but to public and private sector organisations. These could be the tax office, employers, banks and credit organisations (including student loans), utility companies, libraries, dentists etc. Such a database could be set up quietly without further input from individuals and without even issuing cards. Blunkett had also spoken of linking the ID database to the forthcoming NHS one for electronic patient records. Furthermore, a database for all children under 18 (to include their school achievements, health visits, DSS and police records) was proposed last year for addition to the Children's Bill following the Lord Laming report into the death of Victoria Climbié, which according to minister Margaret Hodge could 'also be used to support service planning and delivery' (see Direct Action, No.32).

According to the Regulatory Impact Assessment published alongside the current Bill, a 'terrorist' would need an ID card to 'stay in a hotel, rent accommodation, hire cars and generally carry out their activities'. As Defy-ID astutely brings to our attention, this implies we'd *all* need to have an ID card to do these things! This smacks most clearly of Labour's original idea of the *entitlement card* that Blunkett tried to get through in Feb 2002 on an anti-fraud ticket well before the terror scare really hit the UK, which gives a much clearer picture of the real purpose of a national database. Feasibility of entitlement cards was heavily criticised at the time*, but still fits well with Labour's social control agenda since they came to power which, with a good dose of religious work-ethic thrown in, has seen the imposition of workfare schemes through the New Deal and the more recent persecution of long-term unemployed on incapacity benefit. If retirement age goes up any further it looks like many more of us will be working until

spychips - already at a supermarket near you

Radio-frequency identification tagging, or RFID, is a technology that started off in stock control, motorway tollgates, fancy key-fobs and pet 'collars'. Now it's on individual items in supermarkets for anti-theft and tracking shopping behaviours. Each tag includes an aerial and an electronic chip that sends out a code when it is excited by a transmitter in the shop. Both ASDA/Walmart and Tesco tried them out a while back on "smart shelves" displaying highly nickable Gillette razor blade packs, taking your photo when pick one up. Marks & Spencer is now tagging 3.5 million food trays, and Tesco is selling tagged DVDs in some stores and is massively expanding its RFID use. Tagged clothes, another big product area for RFID, could potentially be tracked outside the shop although the cheaply made tags in common use are fairly large and not very durable. The real danger will come when these become small enough to remain as part of the clothing after sale. A proposed European Union "Intellectual Property Enforcement Directive" would actually forbid removal of embedded tags. Permanent tagging is being encouraged by the EU for limiting global movement of products, similar to regionning of DVDs, although this has been criticised by free-marketeers.

There may still be time to act. Gillette and the supermarkets suffered from bad press when they tried out RFID in razor packs, forcing a temporary withdrawal in some stores, and many privacy organisations are fighting RFID expansion. Various groups are supporting a worldwide boycott of Tesco to test the water in the latest fight against "spychips". Minimum action is shopping less at Tescos. Other retailers, with an eye on their profits, are waiting to see what happens so it's worth having a go, even if boycotting of one supermarket has its limits when they are all at it to some extent!

Not surprisingly, the state is interested in the level of control offered by RFID. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is testing "Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology" (US-VISIT) for tracking when and where people cross borders. RFID tagging is being installed in Ohio State's prison system to track its 44,000 inmates, and some schools are already trying RFID-badges on students.

Other examples of RFID creep are embedded credit cards and mobile phones - these can of course be linked directly to your personal identity and location. There have also been a few (over-hyped) reports of under-the-skin tagging, such as staff in the Mexican Attorney General's office and punters at a Spanish nightclub. If you are worried about ID-cards and other forms of control, it's vital to keep a close eye on RFID developments.

More info on the web, in addition to numerous IndyMedia reports:

http://www.boycottTesco.com
http://www.notags.co.uk
http://www.rfidgazette.org

what is it that anarchists want?

Someone said to me in the midst of an altercation over what anarchism "represented": "what really bothers me about anarchism is that anyone can "be one" and say or do "anything they like".

If you look at the history of anarchism and how and why it came to be in the 19th Century and then compare that with the activities of anarchists around the world today, you can begin to see that there is some truth in this statement. This article tries to look at where the anarchist movement is going and whether we're going in the right direction.

If we look at the achievements of the anarchist movement in the second half of the twentieth century we can see that our successes have been insignificant compared to those of the first. The Spanish revolution was a vindication of anarchist principles. The Aragon and Catalan collectives worked, and they worked well. Workplaces, services and factories were collectivized with workers controlling the organisation of them. According to Eddie Conlon's pamphlet production increased to such an extent that "In June 1937 a plenum of Regional Federations of Peasants was held. Its aim was the formation of a national federation "for the co-ordination and extension of the collectivist movement and also to ensure an equitable distribution of the produce of the land, not only between the collectives but for the whole country""; this was a huge success and although ultimately the revolution was lost our theory won it's battle against those who held it up as nothing more than an utopian idea.

After the collapse of the Aragon front, the defeat of the Anti-Fascist militias and the rise of Franco, anarchism has had little international acclaim to speak of with awe. Skeptics of anarchism could see this as a theoretical problem; that anarchism is simply not strong enough to withstand the new demands and pressures of a globalised world. In part it may be true. But the reason for this isn't because we lack theoretical conviction, but that we appear to be more divided than we actually are.

In terms of class struggle what have we achieved since Spain? Hungary 1956 when anarchist principles were adopted to struggle against the Soviet Union or the Kwangju uprising in South Korea where students fought violently with over twenty thousand riot police and soldiers who raped and murdered hundreds of people. Paris, May 1968 was one instance, an exciting and inspiring instance of tension between students, the working class and the institutions of the state. From 40 students who went on strike to demand an end to the police spies frequenting their faculty to ten million striking workers who fought back; armed with libertarian principles and common interests they demanded and won, through defiance and conflict, huge concessions. It was the largest class upheaval in an industrial country ever. Compared even to the Miners Strike 1984-85 or Argentina 2002-5, the Paris Uprising remains a shining example of working class resistance.

All this however, ended in a return to reformism. The workers went back to work and the students went back to their universities. A revolutionary spark had been lost, this time through a combination of acceptance and betrayal rather than military defeat. Much like the Miners Strike, Argentina, Hungary and Kwangju, although

ID cards from previous page

we drop dead. And Labour despises the black or grey economy they can't get taxes from, because everyone must be involved in building the Gross Domestic Product of UK, which is their real meaning of 'citizenship'. Blunkett's obsession with the idea of a card, continued by Clarke, clouds the fact that a database system would serve a very heavy state function with or without the actual carrying of one.

Bringing opposition to ID cards into the arena of social struggle requires solidarity and we can learn therefore, not just from the broad-based Australian experience of defeating an ID card scheme in 1987** and other examples in New Zealand and the Philippines, but also from the Sans Papiers 'undocumented workers' movement in France that has helped show the way in a country that already has ID.

Let's face it, we already have a sizeable section of the country that is excluded - the homeless, travellers, many poor 'pensioners' or younger people unable to work for any reason, as well as our exploited illegal workers and victimised asylum seekers. Many people are forced, whether they want to or not, to live in the black economy or resort to 'crime'. These are the groups that Labour don't want to exist, since it costs them money or denies them taxes, but they are an inevitable part of a capitalist society that values only work and profit.

Anarchists, who are not stuck in the mire of moralising about a loss of GDP that could in any case be recouped in days by stopping war on Iraq and other military spending, have always worked on and applauded tactics to elude national schemes, like encouraging the thousands of people who disappeared from the poll tax registers at the end of the 1980's. By not caring about the promises of liberal (or 'illiberal') democracy we have a headstart in keeping off the electoral role but more importantly we have been at the forefront of benefits claimants' action groups against Job Seekers' Allowance (see www.geocities.com/ncajsa) and other community-based campaigns. At the hard end of campaigning like-minded activists have rescued asylum prisoners and seen off bailiffs. This is the kind of community model being used by the Defy-ID campaign, and one that should be supported. The solidarity gained in this level of grassroots activity can help build a sustainable fightback that appealing to individual self-interest on single issues will never achieve.

* FIPR response to the UK Entitlement Card consultation - foundation for information policy research: www.fipr.org/cards/entitlementresponse.html

** On Campaigns of Opposition to ID Card Schemes, 01/01/1995, Simon Davies: www.privacyinternational.org/issues/idcard/campaigns.html

concessions were won, revolution was avoided. Groups of activists have continued propagandizing and organizing the fight for liberation, but the general consensus among the workers has and is simply: "Let's get on with it."

Since all this, the Anti-capitalist movement, a decidedly libertarian movement, has emerged as one of the largest organizations of people to resist the spread of neo-liberalism. Anarchists, enviromentalists, NGO's, human rights groups and some Marxists form the base of this decentralized group, which takes its guidance from the 'Peoples Global Actions'. Any group which takes these principles as its core and which advocates resistance to global capital is in effect apart of the anti-capitalist movement. This amalgamation of die-hard revolutionaries and teacup liberals has unfortunately created an incoherence, which could lead those on the outside to ask: "What are they about?" The different groups that have emerged champion many different causes. Labour rights, enviromentalism; campaigns for indigenous people, migration, feminism, biodiversity and genetic engineering, all of which are acceptable causes in themselves. But what does the movement need in order to get where it is going? Indeed, where is it going in the first place?

The Seattle demonstrations against the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation, an organisation responsible for pushing the free trade agenda, were brought to an end by mass action by the state. The police were brought in, in their thousands to attack and dislodge what, thanks to the perseverance of the insurrectionary anarchists involved, became a huge movement of defiance. The subsequent riots put militant politics back on the table, not just for the activists involved, but also for the people who, without agitation came out of their houses to confront the police when tear gas was thrown into their communities. A step in the right direction!

After Seattle the revolutionaries and the reformers went their separate ways to fight their separate battles. The Seattle 'moment' dispersed back to its roots, affinity groups and individual campaigns, only finding some cohesion at events like Genoa, where thousands of people came together to resist the G8. The ideological and tactical differences , however, creates what? On the one side we have Black Bloc and insurrectionary, revolutionary anarchists who see these events as an opportunity to create resistance and confrontation. On the other side the reformists and pacifists who see it as an opportunity to apply "pressure". To form a base where the world and its leaders can see how angry people are. On one side we have the belief in fighting and on the other the belief in lobbying. What is to be expected of this unlikely alliance?

When Bakunin sat on the First International and endured Karl Marx's endless diatribes about his overpowering role as General-Secretary and his love affair with the state, a programme for anarchist working class liberation began to take some form. It was a new time in working class struggle, especially in 19th century Europe, which was plagued with reaction and oppression. This new working class revolutionary movement had a logical base. The enemy of the workers had a face, it could be seen and its effects could be explained. It wasn't just them and us, there were reasons and it created the means for an alternative.

One has to admit that Marx is unarguably the father of anti-capitalism. With his analysis of capitalism, its historical development and its philosophical and psychological effects on humanity it is hard to ignore him; his concept and ideas on capitalism were the beginning of a new understanding of the world. When anarchism was put into theoretical form it did so from this specific basis. Bakunin himself passed comment, no doubt through gritted teeth: "Karl Marx is a man of immense statistical and economic knowledge. His work on Capital...is in the highest degree a scientific or realist work: in the sense that it absolutely excludes any other logic than that of the facts."

One of the problems now facing us in the present day anarchist movement is the split in to varying derivative philosophies and perspectives. Many anarchists see the abandonment of Marx's materialist approach as a pre-condition of individual freedom; but what kind of freedom do they mean? With all the fancy names and social and theoretical nuances, the working class are still exploited, we still work long hours for little pay and we still have no control over our lives. Class struggle anarchists believe the creation of an anarchist society can only come about through the self-struggle of the working class. With lifestyleism, the belief that anarchism can be achieved through individual pursuit, we have an almost religious opting out of capitalist society in return for a life of communal living, enviromentalism and most often militant veganism.

One underlying principle of anarchist thought is direct action, it is the means in which we see the creation of an anarchist society. Rob Sparrow calls it "...the distinctive contribution of anarchists in the realm of political method." In each variant of anarchism this principle upholds itself. From primitivism, individualism and insurrectionism, the concept of direct action, creating through doing, is paramount. Rob Sparrow says further: "Direct action repudiates such acceptance of the existing order and suggests that we have both the right and the power to change the world. It demonstrates this by doing it" Direct action has been a tactic associated with the anarchist movement since the First International. Mikhail Bakunin was famous for his passionate involvement in revolutionary and insurrectionary movements. One historian notes that while on a train ride through Italy he saw a small village in revolt. He called the train to stop, jumped out and agitated the peasants and workers to storm the villa of the Mayor. Malatesta, another First International regular was also prone to throwing himself into acts of direct action, fighting with the Egyptians against the British colonialists.

Right into the 20th century the attentant, the act of bringing "justice" directly to those who were responsible for the exploitation and oppression of the workers, was a common thing. The most notable was Alexander Berkman's assassination attempt on Henry Frick, which landed him in prison for thirteen years. Emma Goldman was implicated in the assassination attempt of President McKinley, although later released without charge. She also served two years in prison for distributing contraceptives. Another example of a famous historical direct action was the tragic story of Marinus Van Der Lubbe who burnt down the German Reichstag in retaliation to the rise of the Nazi's.

Anarchists through out history have never shied away from confronting the institutions of the state. In the 1970's the squatters movement directly resisted the capitalist classes greed plans. There were mass takeovers of luxury flats and empty hotels in London to protest against housing policies. This led to organised workers going on strike in support of the occupations. The road protest camps were another example of libertarian direct action, where people resisted the creation of motorways and the destruction of the environment.

But such campaigns and movements are hampered by their individualist origins and methods. Yes, lifestyle anarchists and individualists have built up a partially successful model of co-operation and solidarity. They have created a network of individual direct actions. Radical Routes and other housing co-operative networks allow people to take control of their lives

and create a new way of living. In some instances they have been remarkably successful. The Sumac centre in Nottingham has created an extremely valuable resource that is used broadly by the community. The café, social clubs, children's events and workshops are so popular that it continues to expand and combined with the campaigns for social issues it makes the Sumac centre a prime example of individualist community direct at work, building a sense of political and alternative understanding,

Another example is the social centre in Leeds, which recently opened where you can buy vegan food, use it for a political or social space or use the internet, read a book and generally relax. The atmosphere is great, the people appear quite cliquey when you first meet them, but they are all good people. The social centre is another example of libertarian inspired individuals building something for themselves. It's direct action at work. "Anyone can do it" is the motto and a motto which is inspirational; but who does this ultimately extend to? Co-operation and solidarity of this nature, although desirable usually extends to the inner circle and not the working class at large. Although workers co-operatives can and have been set up, how realistic is this as an overall goal? Can such initiatives, small as they are, provide the means to demolish capitalism?

The working class still have sub-standard housing, they are still forced into mind-numbing jobs which exploit and are betrayed daily by the politicians and businessmen that rule over them. Hyper capitalism has sent people into a consumer frenzy and the weekend seems to be the only escape. Drug taking and alcohol consumption is at an all time high, millions of hours are being lost through people being ill, stress rates are going up and all the while there is the latest this and that to buy. The stress of modern day living and the effects that capitalism has on people are as much the same, if in different form, than a hundred years ago. The community is being lost by the scare-mongering about immigration, the rise of the far right and the depression and alienation created from having nothing but the small possessions you lock in your house, away from the rest of the world. In recent statistics it was reported that more than 3m people in the UK alone were reported as depressed, with many cases relating to financial worries. Working class communities are run down, worn out and full of nothing. Anti-social behaviour has become so bad nowadays that the government has had to introduce Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, which effectively punishes children for being bored. Young people need activity and stimulation. The tiredness, wariness and disenfranchisement of parents and families at large means young people are not getting the attention they need to grow. Instead of dealing with the real reasons for anti-social behaviour and investing money into building social centres and youth clubs for young people the government is waging wars and giving subsidies to the rich. In one working class community I know, well a ghetto if we're honest, there is one school to educate hundreds of children. Every time it rains however, the roof leaks onto the kids below it or collapses altogether. The school has no money to rebuild it, and the council claim they don't either. What is to be done?

The G8 summit is on its way to Scotland. The richest and most powerful leaders of capitalism in the world will meet at Gleneagles to discuss how to protect themselves and free trade from the apparent ever-increasing global risk of terrorism and social upheaval. The agenda at the G8 this year is simply about cutting crime. Terrorist crime, organised crime, immigration crime, document forgery and narcotics crime. But not war crimes, or human rights abuses or the murder of trade unionists or the destruction of the environment and mass poisonings of helpless people. Leaders who have human rights records, war crimes records and who have lied, cheated and betrayed us, while at the same time destroying the planet we live in will meet and shake each others hand, congratulating each other no doubt on a job well done.

The G8 symbolises the elite of capitalism. They are the harbingers of neo-liberalism and the protectors of the multi-national corporations that exploit the vulnerable and profit from suffering, misery and alienation. Resistance to it is vastly important. Genoa was a sign that people were sick of the lies and hatred caused by their agenda. Tony Blair dubbed the anti-globalisation movement, "The G8 circus" in an attempt to belittle the only truly democratic and participatory movement challenging the neo-liberal consensus he supports.

"Creating modes of direct action is crucial to our chance of liberation, no matter how confrontational."

The atmosphere of defiance at Genoa is almost exclusively attributed to the Black Bloc and the insurrectionary anarchists who trained, prepared and organised themselves to irritate, unhinge and provoke the authorities. This idea and tactic is an important one. Coming out in force and unflinchingly challenging and confronting the agents of the state is a valuable tool for fighting the state and capitalism. Wolfi Landstreicher tells how "...anarchists must attack, for waiting is defeat; what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded." Mutiny and subversion was precisely what the authorities got. Although some groups like the post modern communists 'Ya Basta' and Pink Block wanted to use non-violent means to get inside the Red Zone, Black Block proposed violent resistance. From one personal story of someone involved it is inspiring to see how large, committed and organised they were: "I formed up with the infamous black bloc. The black bloc of autonomists and anarchists proposed to mask up, pad up and take the police on directly. Our black bloc set off about 2000 strong and succeeded in meeting up with about another 4000 activists from Cobos."

Critics within the anti-capitalist movement saw this as a prime example of the "bankruptcy" of anarchism. Marxists and reformists alike were disappointed at the "violent tactics" employed by the anarchists, and saw them as counter-productive and alienating for the actual anti-globalisation cause. This patronising attitude is all-too common; , the stuffy closet reformists disguised as Marxists will always try and make those who resist authority look unreasonable because it serves their authoritarian purpose. Regardless of any mistakes, the black bloc managed to create tension and aggravated the police to the desired effect. Tragically one anarchist, Carlos Guiliani, was murdered after being shot by a soldier.

The organisation for Genoa was, for all intents and purposes, relatively secret. The Black Bloc and the white suited 'Tutte Blanches' kept their activities to themselves before the actual event. But this time the organisation has been far reaching and on a massive scale. The Dissent Network, which was created in 2003 out of those involved in ecological direct action, the anti-war movement and the anti-capitalist movement have done masses of work. It has adopted the 'People's Global Action' principles and has set to work creating what it calls a 'Network of Dissent' to the July G8 meeting. The Dissent Network is a decentralised organisation of affinity groups who have gone full steam ahead to work out logistics and training. Throughout the last year workshops have been organised for activists to teach activists. Research, information and fundraising have been passed to the different working groups who organise themselves. . It appears to have been a massive operation with people from all over the country and the world participating in co-operation.

The Dissent Network has adopted , "a confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations." Good step. Dissent Network, compared to the Socialist Worker Party front groups like 'the G8 Alternative,' is by far the biggest and most organised group and will pose a real threat to the G8. It will no doubt manage to shut it down and create defiance with the authorities on the scale of Genoa and maybe even Seattle. The effects of such confrontations will once again put militant politics back on the table, how long and to what effect will be the

biggest test of it's existence.
On the left, the Dissent Network is criticised by the elitist of the materialist realm. These stodgy old Marxists, authoritarian or otherwise, who see these activities as a waste of time by "youngsters" with nothing better to do, can patronise all the want. This attitude, that 'naivety makes the impressionable youth grow angrier', comes about because of the symbolic nature of the G8 resistance and largely because the working class are not involved. Fine, but the objective of the Dissent Network is not to liberate the working class, it is to resist the G8.
The Dissent Network is most likely made up of young people, mainly individuals with no affinity to a libertarian organisation with wider class perspectives, but that does not suddenly make it irrelevant. Resisting the G8 is an important part of being an anti-capitalist and extending leftwards, as an anarchist. Creating modes of direct action is crucial to our chance of liberation, no matter how confrontational. Emma Goldman points out quite poetically "Anarchism therefore stands for direct action, the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions, economic, social, and moral" and we should agree with her.
So if we agree that the G8 is important in terms of creating resistance and that it is merely symbolic, does that mean the Dissent Network goes without criticism? No. The Dissent Network has done well. We can admit that, but maybe it has done too well? There is a difference between believing the G8 demonstrations to be symbolic and believing that the main contention of the anarchist movement or anarchists in general should be towards this symbolism.
The Dissent Network has spent vast amounts of time, effort and money on building this network, for a symbol. How can this be justified? Individualism? The working class are undergoing continual bombardment from the state and capitalism and instead of building a dissent network to resist the day-to-day fights of working class people, the Dissent Network has spent thousands of pounds, man power and resources aimed at pissing of the police. Was all of it really necessary?
As a class struggle anarchist the picture for me is clear. The G8 summit, no matter how much we fight, how many police we manage to get past, aggravate, confront, inflate and resist the demonstration and inescapable riots that no doubt will ensue are without argument pure symbolism. Regardless of the ability of those involves in the organisation of the Dissent Network, any one who believes that it can be an actual force for change are deluding themselves. They have done well in doing what they are doing, and the days of action will invariably be something to remember; but then what? Going back to the Landstreicher quote,"...what is needed is open mutiny and the spreading of subversion among the exploited and excluded" The exploited and excluded are not involved in the Dissent Network to any significant degree. The majority of those involved are lifestyle anarchists who have opted out of society in order to be anarchists. Their way of life is already defined and while they indulge themselves in organising what is nothing more than a gesture, the working class have to deal with state repression without the means to fight back. Once the riots have died down and the media have got bored of the story the G8 leaders will still be in control and the exploited and excluded will be no better off.

"...no matter how many police we manage to get past, aggravate, confront and the inescapable riots, [these actions] are pure symbolism."

At the moment the anti-capitalist movement, the Dissent Network included, is a theoretically unorganised mess. This is where the statement "anarchists... anyone can "be one" and say or do "anything they like"" find's its truth. Anyone can get involved with the anti-capitalist movement and can say and do what ever they like. This may live up to some ideal dream of non-partisan politics but the reality of it is confusion and inconsistency. The anti-capitalist movement has no unifying direction or purpose other than being broad based and anti-capitalist. If it is to go somewhere this agenda has to become specific and clear. The destruction of capitalism and the state can only come about through the propagation of a revolutionary ideal, in context with what society is. Class analysis has undergone many tests, but has never failed in providing a clear answer to society's problems.
What will come after the G8? There is nothing in the Dissent literature that suggests anything. The individuals involved will continue with what and go where? The lifestyleism of the twenty first century will no doubt continue to thrive, pursuing the chimera of an alternative means of living. Class struggle anarchists will have to pick up the pieces and continue attempting to build a wider resistance to capitalism; wider than the G8.
If that's to happen though we need a dialogue. The lifestylists need to get a perspective on material analysis and the class struggleists need to get out of the habit of being so righteously patronising. We need to work together. The huge amount of finances, time and resources gone in to building the Dissent Network were, in my opinion, a waste of time. Having said that, what we do have now is a model that can and should be replicated. Working class communities are in dire need for assistance. Dissent and the anti-capitalist movement is made up in part by lifestylists who want to challenge capitalism and the state by creating a practical alternative. We can do this. But instead of building a forum of debate and organisation for resisting the G8 and the WTO, what is necessary is to combine that idea with a class perspective. Building a forum for debate within working class communities and organising practical alternatives for all of us that will resist capitalism and the state on a local, more humble level.
The time and resources, money and effort that went into building the G8 would have been better directed to those communities where young people are tearing each other apart because of boredom, and school roofs are falling in because they can't afford to repair them. Providing community spaces for working class people to combat illiteracy or helping families resist the debt collectors and the racists. . Going from symbolic messages, which I admit are valid, to practical involvement in communities are where the anti-capitalist movement should be going. Its focus should switch to things it can do, right now. How do we justify anything else? Those revolutionary and individualist anarchists who are involved in the anti-capitalist movement need to do what they have done to build resistance to the G8. Opt out of an unlikely alliance with reformists, disguised or not, and build a network which resists capitalism and the state on a day-to-day basis. The Dissent Network has proved it has the energy, ideas, talent and knowledge to do just that. They can build networks of resistance within and not outside of local communities..
It is not just us, as anarchists, who want an anarchist society, it is every single working class and unemployed person who is tired of being treated like a slave or like shit, tired of losing out on dreams, tired of having nothing and paying out everything to a system they hate. For every person who wants a better world, for those people embattled in a day-to-day struggle against drudgery, frustration and insanity; for all of us a network of resistance is everything. Dissent must develop towards where it really matters. To achieve liberation against the G8, the working class, the unemployed, the struggling and the tired need to be inspired. They need to realise that change is possible, that confidence in our abilities to fight back is what's required for us to change our world.
After the dust has settled over Gleneagles and we have come back with stories to tell of confrontation and defiance, we have to remember what we are doing. Why we were there in the first place and what can come next. In order to effect any real, significant change, the anarchist and anti-capitalist movement has to become pro-active where it matters. If we can resist the G8, we can resist our bosses too. If we can beat the police, we can beat the degradation of our communities. If we can remember to fight, we can remember what life should be like, and ultimately what anarchists want.

casualisation and flexibility

Casualisation not only leads to lower wages and benefits, but also increases the ratio of unpaid to paid labour, and the intensity of work.

It is a process where a dual labour market develops, stratified and mutually isolated: a core of permanent workers with a periphery of workers on fixed-term contracts, or contracted as self-employed individuals. This article attempts to introduce the topic, giving a broad overview of casualisation, and pointing to some of the broader implications of the forced "flexibilisation" of the labour market.

Any discussion of this must start with how workers subjectively experience the process. The workers who are at the sharp end are almost entirely atomised, forced to use agencies as mediators between themselves and the employer. The assignments are variable in length, but generally grant less that a days notice before the work finishes, the worker either returning to unemployment, or being sent to another workplace. This is an effective barrier to the development of solidarity with other workers, and frustrates workplace organising.

The agency receives a portion of each hours work, leaving the worker doubly exploited, with two sets of parasites extracting value. Temps don't qualify for the most basic of benefits: maternity pay, sick pay, pensions and holiday entitlements are all denied. As a result of EU temp-work legislation, agencies were forced to extend rudimentary benefits to their workers, like holiday pay. However, this was largely a PR exercise. What happened in reality was an incorporation of holiday pay into the hourly rate that a worker received, a paper exercise in shuffling numbers around. Capital seems to have brought about 'just-in-time' employment to go with its 'just-in-time' production.

Low-skilled and manual jobs have become almost totally the preserve of the agency, and here "flexible" results in dangerous work often being undertaken with little or no training. The death in 1998 of 24-year old Simon Jones in a shipyard only hours after starting work (with several minutes "training") was the first well publicised example to bring this to peoples' attention. The trend continued of course, with current rates of more than 200 workers killed at work each year (with over 2 million being killed worldwide). The recent case of the Chinese cockle-pickers illustrated how use of illegal migrant labour, leaves such workers in a hyper-exploited position existing outside any regulatory framework at all. Little is known of the true extent of this but sectors known to be heavily reliant are garment manufacture, restaurants (and associated food industries like the meat-packing plants in Norfolk), construction and sex-work.

Contract killing

This amounts to a ratcheting up of the discipline applied to labour, something that applies equally to those in longer-term work. There has been a long-term change in hiring strategies, with the widespread introduction of fixed contracts in place of the "job for life", reducing job security and forcing workers into having to periodically renegotiate their positions. The teaching profession experienced this in the mid-80s, and it later spread throughout the public sector, often as a prelude to privatisation. Agencies are integral to the process of privatisation and are being extensively used in the NHS, especially in care-roles, administration and support positions. Self-employed subcontracting has long been used as a way of undermining workers organising abilities (for example in construction), and this has now spread to many other sectors. This uncertainty has lead to the longest working hours and highest levels of work-related stress in Europe as workers compete with each other to retain their jobs. The benefits of this to the bosses are obvious: higher intensity of work at lower costs, with the added gift of regular unpaid overtime (according to the TUC, to the tune of £23bn last year alone) and a disincentive to "be difficult". According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the productivity per worker has more than doubled in the last 30 years. There has also been a massive rise in the number of workers as women (by choice or necessity) rejected their traditional roles and entered the job market, and the heightened disciplining of the unemployed marshalled many into low-wage service sector jobs. Deregulation of labour markets (e.g. through weakening legislation that once protected job security) makes it easier for employers to eliminate jobs or replace workers with others on less secure contracts. It becomes easier to pit workers against each other, extracting more labour at times and places more convenient to the process of production. Casualisation and "labour flexibility" have the overall effect of making it more difficult for workers to improve or extend their conditions.

Casualisation as process: there to here

The phenomenon being described must be understood as a product of the class struggle. It is very difficult to disentangle the complex interdependencies of cause-and-effect, as every economic development is a result of the manoeuvrings of both sides. It seems that the process of casualisation is largely a result of three factors:

1. the shift from a manufacturing to a service based economy
2. decomposition of the working class as a political actor
3. increase in investment capital flows

The shift away from manufacturing (with it's traditional high levels of unionisation and strong collective bargaining) and towards services (small workplaces, higher ratios of management to workers, low levels of unionisation) has been a feature of the post-Thatcher era, with an attendant shift of power from labour to capital.

This facilitated the destruction of organised labour, alongside anti-union laws and manufactured set-piece confrontations. A non-unionised worker in the UK gets an average of only 23 days holiday a year, compared to 29 for a unionised worker, and levels of unionisation have consistently fallen. The now full integration of business unions into the capitalist structure has reduced industrial militancy, and consequently the leadership has failed to put up a significant fight to defend their members' interests. This has been a product not only of the historic defeats of organised labour, but also the collaborationist nature of business unions as mediator between capital and labour. Accumulated finance capital was used to fund both the investment and development of manufacturing plants abroad and the transfer of capacity to these areas. The ability of this capital to be rapidly extracted and redeployed elsewhere - enshrined in neo-liberal financial policies - has brought massive pressure to bear on any remaining knots of organised labour. Workers' demands are countered with the very real threat of the outsourcing of their jobs. The bosses have used this to cut back on wage costs, attacking the wages and conditions of unionised workers, and by reducing the number of workers capable of being unionised further decomposing working class power.

A new role for the reserve army?

It is possible that the shift towards a casualised workforce denotes a restructuring of the terrain of the class struggle. The "reserve army" that capitalism has historically created seems to be under new orders, and is being redeployed as casual labour. The massed ranks of the unemployed have ceased to be as useful to capital now that the working class has been politically weakened. Their historic function was to keep wages down by providing a constant entry pressure on the job market. The effect of this supply glut was mitigated by the power of collective bargaining. As the strength of the unions (and by proxy the ability of workers to collectively force higher wages on the capitalists) has been reduced, there is less collective pressure keeping wages up, so a portion of the unemployed can be siphoned back into work.

The dole arose through the inclusion of working class needs in the social democratic state. With the retreat of social democracy, the state has repeatedly sought to 'reform' welfare. The introduction of the jobseekers' allowance in 1996 spearheaded an increased disciplining of the unemployed through social policy. The New Deal and associated programs have been very successful in forcibly shifting unemployed workers into low wage, low security "McJobs", often socially subsidised (according to a June 2000 Tory attack on Labour, to the tune of around £20K per job). Workers are regularly conditioned to tone down their expectations and be prepared to accept lower paid or skilled work than they had hoped for. The benefits system is used as a stick to make it increasingly difficult to refuse low paid work or anti-social hours, and a carrot is profferedin the guise of the tax system. Through benefits such as the Working Family Tax Credits, people are structurally encouraged onto the job market, often into part-time work, with workers subsidising low wage employers through their income tax. This greater regulation of the unemployed is the flip side to the deregulation of the labour market.

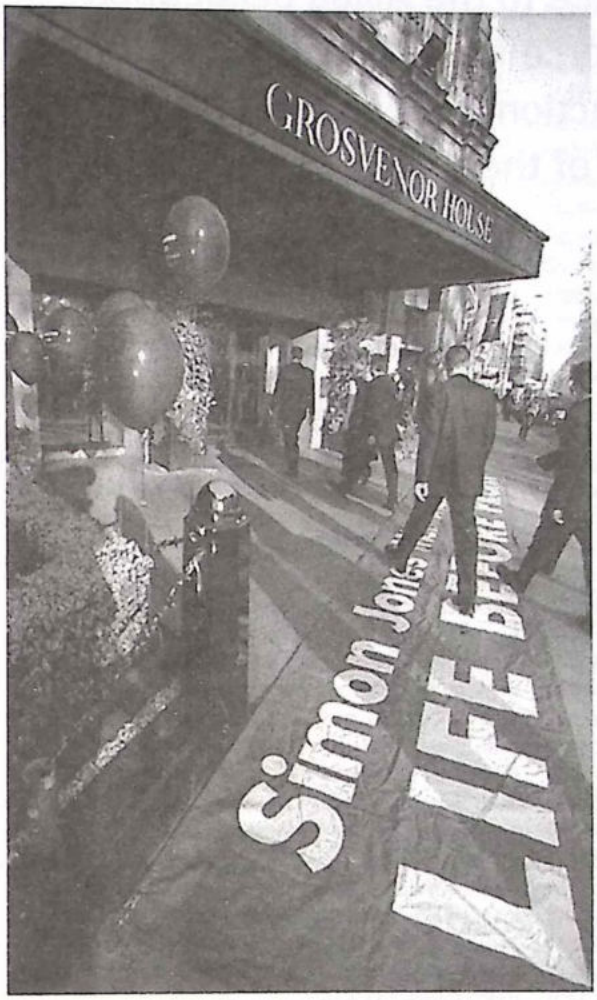
Prospects for resistance

The last 30 years have seen a rapid increase in the amounts of speculative capital flowing around the global capital markets, which has placed another weapon in the armoury of the capitalist class. The globalisation of capital places pressure on all capitalist states to deregulate labour markets and facilitate cuts in labour costs. Attempts to radically alter the structure of UK capital markets as part of a reformist agenda would risk provoking a rapid outflow of capital, something the domestic state is never going to allow.

The prospects for effective resistance to casualisation therefore do not lie in abstract campaigns intended to put pressure on the state to legislate against the bosses' interests. There are three main strategies that may hold some promise.

Worker-Run Temping Agencies

One possible model for mitigating the effects of casualisation is for workers to set up their own agencies, outside the control of the capitalist class. It has been suggested that these could be directly run by unions. In a mature economy with intense internal competition, companies mainly concerned with reducing costs could respond well to an agency able to provide workers at or below the cost of workers from other agencies. A co-operatively managed agency would have much lower overheads than a private-sector equivalent being able to provide higher direct wages and benefits to its workers and possibly providing a site of political re-composition.



There are historical precedents for this. The beginnings of the labour movement in Italy saw the formation of labour cooperatives amongst agricultural workers, which resurfaced in the movement of the Italian "organised unemployed" in the 80s. Similarly, the early French syndicalists set up (or more accurately took over) the "Bourse de Travails"- labour exchanges that provided a forum for political agitation. Aside from the distaste engendered in contemplating managing our own exploitation, there are issues associated with entering into competition with capitalist enterprises. One of the factors that caused the co-operative movement to fail was that it was subject to all the same pressures as traditional business. Over time hierarchy and bureaucracy developed and the radicalism ebbed. For a union to take on such a role may exacerbate the contradiction already implicit within what Negri calls "its traditional function as half-party and half-merchandise". However, the class struggle must take precedence over squeamishness: the question is whether these forms would help or hinder the self-organising of casualised workers.

The Development Of New Subjectivities

Some initiatives have accepted the new terrain of atomisation and are seeking to develop a collective identity based on the shared experience of casualised work. The idea seems to be to attempt to develop a class-consciousness based not on proximity to other workers but on the insecure conditions experienced by temporary workers. Apart from the use of wanky rhetoric like "existential precarity", my personal opinion is that this project is of limited usefulness beyond raising the profile of casualised workers.

Restoring the ties that bind

As described in the previous section, there has been a long-term shift in hiring practices by the business class. As the form of the labour commodity changes, the organisational forms that struggle take must also change. Casualisation presents a threat to the whole working class, not just those affected by it directly. The slow encroachment of fixed-term contracts, forced overtime and the reduction of job security are threats to everyone. If a casualised worker finds a better job, they leave behind a position that another worker must fill. The most promising route for struggle is the development of much stronger links between temporary and permanent staff within each workplace. There are many positive examples of this, for instance the Workmates group on the London Underground and the Telegraph workers who brought temps in on all future wage demands and negotiations. This route would develop solidarity between workers, reduce the isolation experienced by the casualised, and increase the chances of both segments of the workforce winning better conditions.

A long term goal should be developing class forces to the point where there are strong alliances between employed and unemployed workers, leading to the organisation of workers before they even enter the productive process. This would also be a method of organising workers within a community framework, encouraging class solidarity on another front. This was successfully accomplished in Sweden and Norway during and just after WW1, where workers in construction, logging and mining won better conditions through threatening pre-employment strikes.

women's struggles in iraq

The Islamist victory at the Iraq elections of January 2005 show that political Islam is not just an opposition force to the Allied occupation but also a powerful force for collaboration, putting in place a reactionary regime where women will be some of the first victims.

In relationship to other countries in the Middle East, Iraqi women benefited from a greater amount of liberty, without of course a true equality with men. This was not due to the "secular" nature of Baathism, but to the struggles of women themselves in the 1950s, before the coming to power of Saddam. The law on personal status of 1958 passed by the Baathists, guaranteed education, divorce and the right of women to keep their children but suffered from amendment after amendment. In fact Saddam spelt out that in the cases unforeseen by law, the sharia (Islamic law) would take precedence.

The degradation of women's rights really got under way with the Iran-Iraq war started in 1980. The Iraqi feminist Huzan Mahmud explains:" Iraq," said Saddam, "has need of women at home, making food for their husbands and children, making economies and not spending too much, they must help the country to overcome." All that ended up in permanently violating women's rights. In particular during the war between Iran and Iraq, women represented more than 70% of the civil service, but when the war ended women were sent home". Women's organisations were banned outside of the Union of Iraqi Women, the female branch of the Baathist Party.

With the first Gulf War, the situation deteriorated further with Saddam adopting a style that conformed more with Islamic values, in order to win the support of Islamic regimes and organisations. He started the "Campaign for Faithfulness" which led to the elimination of prostitutes by beheading. At least 130 women were beheaded in one year alone, and the figure probably ran much higher than that. Most of those executed were not prostitutes but women who criticised the regime or were wives of oppositionists. Among them were wives of Shi'ite imams, TV presenters, doctors and gynaecologists.

Another symptom of the attack on women was the rise of illiteracy during the period of embargo between 1991 and 2003. Literacy,which had risen from 75 [per thousand?] to 755 with the proclamation of the Republic, fell to 255 [per thousand?]by 2000. This was not just due to the politics of the regime but to the hard conditions of the embargo, where everyday survival came first. War widows and the poorest women suffered the most. In 1998 a survey showed that out of 4,600 women and girls in Baghdad, 16% suffered from severe malnutrition and 41% from chronic malnutrition. This resulted in a fall in women's height. Men and boys suffered far less from the embargo. Saddam put through measures legally tolerating "honour killings". A law passed in 1990 exempted men who had killed women "to defend the honour of his family". So men could kill their wives, their sisters or their daughters suspected of adultery, immorality or for having let themselves be raped!

In the Kurdish region of Iraq that had in effect become autonomous from 1991 to 2003, Baathist legislation on women continued for a long time, despite the participation of women in civil society, in government and in the *peshmerga* (militia forces). Officially, the law on honour killings was not abolished in the zone controlled by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan until 2000. In the zone controlled by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, more than 500 honour killings took place in 2000 alone, and the Baathist law appears not to have been abolished. The Kurdish nationalists have tolerated this practice and have made no effort to alter it. On the contrary the offices of the Independent Organisation of Women (IOW), and the shelter set up by them at Sulemaniah to protect women fleeing from honour killings, were shut down by the Patriotic Union. Opened in 1998, this shelter was supported by European women's organisations and sheltered more than 4,000 women while open.

On the 14th July 2000, the armed forces of the Patriotic Union invaded the IOW offices and the shelter, arrested some militants, seized its archives and funds. Three of the shelter guards and the shelter's residents were imprisoned. A day later a man murdered his sister. A few days after that, a former resident of the shelter was murdered by her brother.

Since the occupation

Despite the boasts of the Americans and their allies of introducing "democracy" into Iraq and liberating women, the situation has not got any better. The veil, considered old-fashioned before, has become a necessity if women want to go out in the street. The Islamists have used insults and violence to intimidate women, including throwing vitriol in women's faces. Rape has multiplied, as well as the kidnapping and sale of women. Price on the market: $200 for a virgin, half if she isn't. The puppet government put into place by the Allied coalition is under pressure from the Islamist groups who take part in it. These parties, linked to the regime in Iran (al'Dawa, Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), share with their opponents of the religious resistance the project of establishing an Islamic state in Iraq, even if their tactics differ. The attempt to introduce the sharia was met by demonstrations called by 25 women's organisations, despite the danger this represented. Yannar Mohammed, one of the founders of the Organisation for the Freedom of Women in Iraq (OFWI), received death threats from the Army of the Companions of the Prophet, a pro-Taliban group. Honour killings have not disappeared with the occupation. The kidnapping of young girls for prostitution are equally common. These supply networks of prostitution, particularly in the the Yemen. The OFWI is involved in setting up shelters for women who are victims of violence and threatened by honour killings. Two were set up, one in Baghdad and one in Sulemaniah, in the North. Here the Patriotic Union has made threats against it.

The Kurdish situation

The Patriotic Union is considered more progressive than its rival, the Kurdish Democratic Party, notably because of the number of women involved. But they have not forgotten the March 1991 insurrection, when workers councils were set up. The two nationalist parties regained control of the situation, re-establishing control of the

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alliances between employed and unemployed workers, leading to the organisation of workers before they even enter the productive process. This would also be a method of organising workers within a community framework, encouraging class solidarity on another front. This was successfully accomplished in Sweden and Norway during and just after WW1, where workers in construction, logging and mining won better conditions through threatening pre-employment strikes.

writers for anarchism

The man of letters: Octave Mirbeau

At the end of the 19th Century, many French writers were attracted to anarchism. Some of them were fascinated by the bomb attacks of Ravachol and Emile Henry and wanted to write a book that would be a literary bomb, destroying the foundations of religion, the family and the nation state. For example, the Symbolists celebrated "free verse" as "anarchist verse". Many, after achieving fame, abandoned any notion of anarchism.

One who did not was Octave Mirbeau. For him, anarchism was not a fashionable phase, or part of a misspent youth. He discovered the ideas of Proudhon and Kropotkin quite late in life after having been a writer for Bonapartist and anti-Semitic newspapers. From 1883 he began to change tack, editing *Les Grimaces*, a biting satirical journal. From 1885, he began to adopt more and more openly anarchist positions. He regularly supported the work of the anarchist-communist Jean Grave. He was one of his best defenders in print, following Grave's trial over his work, *The Dying Society and Anarchy*. He gave financial aid to anarchists in difficulty. He used his position as an influential writer to popularise the ideas of anarchism. He wrote "The Strike of the Voters" in the daily paper *Figaro*, where he called for abstention at the ballot box.

He explained the actions of Ravachol, pointing to the social reasons for them, whilst underlining their political limitations. At the same time, he helped out struggling writers like the clothing worker Marguerite Audoux, Neel Doff and Charles Vildrac. During the Dreyfus Affair he was extremely active, organising many meetings in Paris and throughout France, never retreating before the threats of the anti-Dreyfusards. In these actions he certainly made up for his previous life writing for anti-Semitic papers. For Mirbeau, anarchism did not just mean revolutionising literature, but giving himself, his time and his money to it. He was the main financial supporter of the anarchist newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

His works were the reflection of his anarchist commitment. Many of his works describe deprived lives, the absurdities of bureaucracy and the corruption of power. *L'Abbe Jules* and *Sebastien Roch* were two extremely anti-clerical novels. *The Diary of a Chambermaid* is not just the tale of the corruption of the upper classes but of the rise to power of an anti-Semite. Luis Bunuel, the Spanish filmmaker understood this, and in his film of Mirbeau's novel, he shows how the rise of fascism is linked to the ideas and values of the ruling class.

Mirbeau's most notorious novel *The Torture Garden* is often dismissed as nothing more than a decadent novel of sado-masochism. In fact this misunderstands its political message. Its dedication, "To priests, soldiers, judges, men who educate, lead and govern men, I dedicate these pages of Murder and Blood" gives the game away. Why are certain crimes illegal and not others? Mirbeau lists industry, colonial commerce, war, hunting and anti-Semitism as legal forms of murder.

Mirbeau often deals with power in his books. Not just how it is exercised over the individual but how it is internalised and how those who govern us use it. A passionate writer, he was one of those rare individuals who were able to reconcile social commitment with a total freedom of creation.

The activist writer: Ernestan

Ernestan was the pen name of Ernest Tanrez (1898-1954) who came from a middle class family, with a French speaking father and a Flemish mother. Deeply effected by the slaughter of the First World War, from 1921 he began writing for the Belgian libertarian press, for *Bulletin Libertaire* and *l'Emancipateur* and then for the international anarchist press (*le Libertaire*, *Combat Syndicaliste*, CNT). He also published several pamphlets like *Socialism Against Authority* and the *Libertarian Socialist Manifesto*. To support the Spanish Revolution, he started a paper *Rebellion*. In 1940, taking refuge in France from the Nazi invasion, he was denounced to the Vichy government and spent 3 months in the concentration camp at Vernet. Freed from there, he returned to Belgium. There, he was arrested by the Gestapo as a supporter of the Communist Party (a joke, but a very unpleasant one) and interned. His imprisonment had a terrible effect on his health and he emerged physically diminished.

After the war he continued with his conferences where he explained his libertarian ideas and his collaboration with the anarchist press, writing for *Volonta*, the Italian paper and for *Pensee et Action* (Thought and Action) a review published in Brussels. His last pamphlet was the *Value of Liberty*, and the one before that was *You Are An Anarchist*. In this pamphlet, Ernestan uses the technique developed by the Italian anarchist Malatesta in which a conversation takes place between two people. Here, an anarchist, Francois meets an acquaintance, Pierre, who is vaguely socialist and out on strike. Francois talks about the great socialist ideas: anarchism is not disorganisation it IS organisation and free association, Leninism is the dictatorship of a minority, there can be no socialism without liberty. Little by little, Pierre is convinced and ends up feeling more anarchist and revolutionary than Francois!

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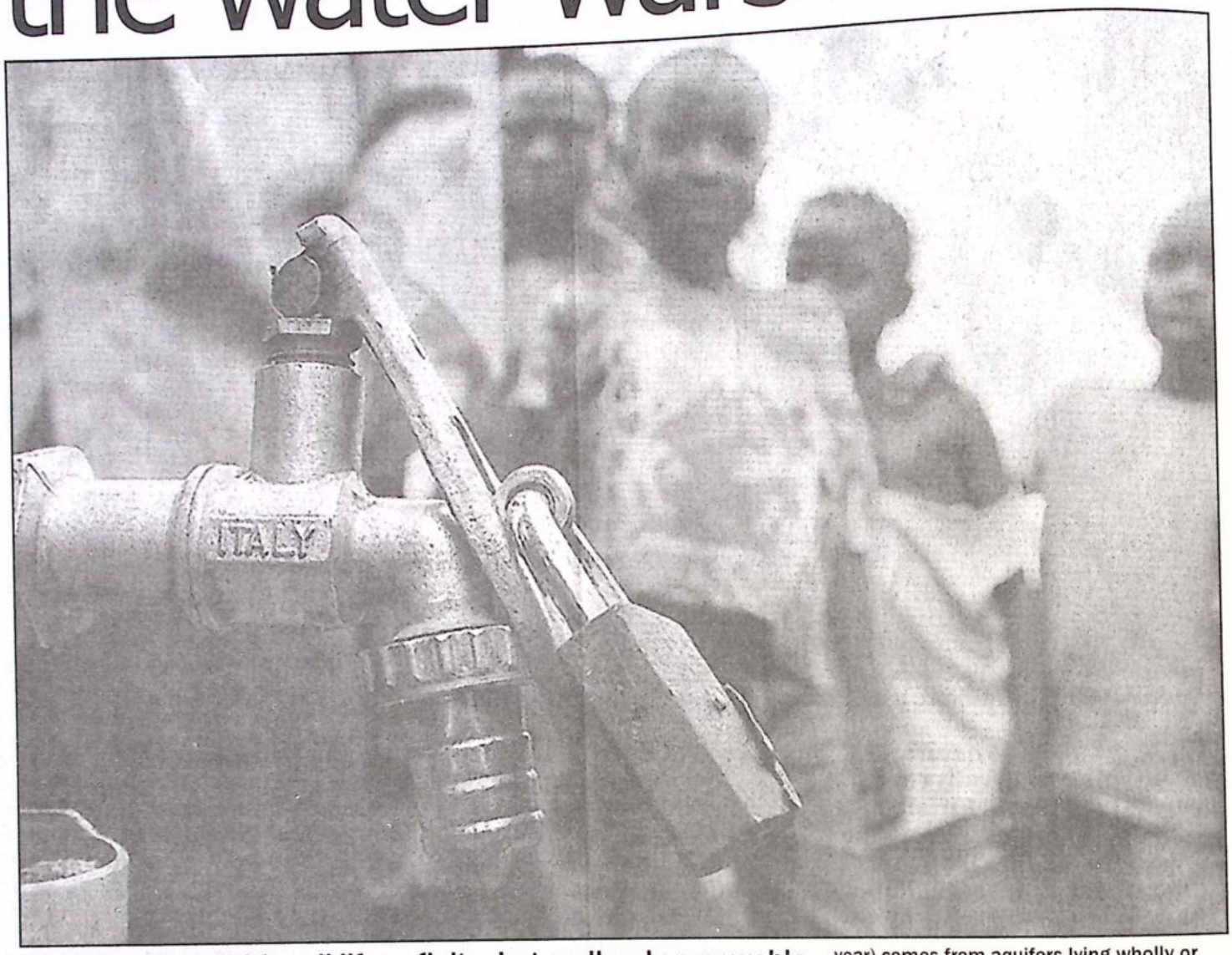
factories. The militant feminist Sakar Ahmed was beaten by her brothers as she was in the process of writing a book against honour killings. Her father approved this act. The dancer Hinadi, member of the dance group el-Portoqala, was murdered during Ramadan by an Islamist gang who regarded her videos as "pornographic", because they evoked love between boys and girls. Other women have been beaten for wearing jeans, or for going to the hairdresser rather than hide their hair under a veil. More than 1,000 female students have abandoned university since the campaign by the Islamists for control of the universities. At Mosul, the dean of the University of Law was shot dead then beheaded, along with her husband. The director of the Department of Translation suffered the same fate, as well as a dozen women in public life who were doctors, vets, and civil servants.

Hatred of women is to be found equally in the religious resistance groups as in the parties allied with the Americans. The Iraqi State is unable to put an end to the endemic violence. This violence is proportionally due more to the criminal gangs than to the religious resistance. And even where they are able to act, the governmental forces are unwilling to do so, because they often share the same outlook towards women, as with the regional government of the Kurdish nationalists.

Only the autonomous action of women allying themselves with the Iraqi radical workers movement shows any possibility of progress on this front. The so-called "democratisation" and "modernisation" promised by the Allied forces has proved to be a sham.

Adapted from an article in the French magazine Courant Alternatif.

the water wars



Water is essential for all life, a finite, but endlessly renewable resource. One third of the world's population do not have access to a supply of safe drinking water, consequently, a third of deaths globally are from water-borne diseases.

The water crisis is worldwide however, affecting (over) developed countries too, whether they are 'water-rich' (such as Britain) or not. Examples from the Middle East and Europe show the depth and breadth of this problem.

The lower River Jordan in the Middle East is symptomatic of this global water crisis. This stretch, which runs between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, has been turned into a drainage ditch by dams and pumping stations which divert almost 90% of the water. Parts of the surrounding valley and the Dead Sea are currently on the brink of an ecological disaster, a 70 mile zone of crisis.

The Israeli-Arab war of 1967 was triggered by attempts to divert the sources of the river in South Lebanon and the Golan Heights. Afterwards, the Israeli state began to appropriate water supplies to support new settlements, as well as towns and settlements within Israel. 30% of Israel's water supply (600 million cubic metres a year) comes from aquifers lying wholly or partly under the West Bank. Since 1967, the West Bank Palestinians (1.4 million in the mid 1990s) are allocated 115 million cubic metres a year, and have been barred from digging new wells, or renovating old ones. In contrast, the Jewish settler population (130,000) are allocated 30 million cubic metres. The remainder (455 million cubic metres) goes to Israel. Egypt offered Israel 400 million cubic metres annually to settle its conflict and assist the Palestinians, but the conflict remains unresolved.

The lower stretch of the Jordan is now little more than a drainage ditch; 50 years ago the annual flow was 1.3 billion cubic metres, today 200 million constitute a good year. Nearly half of that consists of raw sewage from the Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements, the effluent from commercial fish farms, and other untreated wastewater. Gidon Bromber, of Friends of the Earth of the Middle East (FoEME) commented "Ironically, it is sewage that is maintaining what little biodiversity there is along the Jordan. Right now the river is so desperate, the sewage is the only thing keeping the river flowing at times. It feeds life there". At the lower end of the river the pollutants spill into the Dead Sea, compounding an

environmental crisis where the sea level has fallen 25 metres since Israel dammed the river, and industry began to suck water out. Munqeth Mehyar (of FoEME Amman) asks ironically "Is it a competition; who can damage the river more than the other?" As Bromber correctly points out - "Each side tried to grab as much of the resources as they can without consideration of the consequences. It started in the 60s with Israel ceasing the flow of the upper Jordan into the lower Jordan. Syria tried to build a dam at the same time to stop water coming down...[The state of] Jordan in the 70s built a canal to capture the main tributary into the river. It escalated from there" The current problems are compounded by Amman's construction of a new dam on the Yarmuk river, which is the Jordan rivers' largest tributary. The straightforward practical solution is to divert less water. FoEME, is a cross border group, and brought together officials from Amman and Jerusalem in early March of this year to pressurise them into action. No progress was forthcoming, however - "Unfortunately, environmental policies are governed by politics" admitted Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan. Faced by the refusal of both governments to restore the rivers supply of natural water, FoEME is pressing for the sewage to be treated, so that it is pumped into the Jordan as clean water.

Encouraged by a surge of prosperity in the 1960s, the Spanish ignored the fact that they live in a semi-arid country that is prone to periodic, lengthy droughts. Water-hungry Golf courses were built for tourists, swimming pools for themselves, and lawns and gardens that require daily watering proliferated. Farmers diversified from their traditional drought resistant produce, such as figs and olives, into 'thirsty' crops such as rice and strawberries. The result is that Spain is now the world's fourth highest per capita consumer of water, after the U.S, Canada, and Russia. Now it has to build huge dams, and pay the cost to divert rivers to over-developed areas, amid growing environmental and community opposition. Many factors (which apply elsewhere also) conspire to support this. These include laws that give the producers the right to squander resources so long as there is a consumer demand to be satisfied (big farmers have the same licence in Britain). The role of the centralised State is also crucial. Largely controlled by business influences, it arbitrates the management of resources through its control of revenue, command of resources, expertise, and the power to enforce policy on citizens.

In contrast to Spain and the Middle East, Britain is a water-rich area with a high rainfall, and only occasional water shortages. Until the 1990s, water was seen as a common good, and water planners saw any form of supply restriction, such as a ban on the use of hosepipes, as an admission of failure. The regional water authorities pooled access to water resources, and made long term plans for a London ring main, recharging aquifers from winter river water. People and organisations co-operated to manage water resources relatively effectively, and to save water when it was needed e.g. during the drought of 1975/76 when only 76mmn of rainfall fell all summer.

"There are plans for eight new or enlarged reservoirs in the south-east of England. What is needed is conservation and sensible use of water, however."

The Conservative government privatised water in 1989, increasing water costs to the average household by 67% between 1989 and 1995. Company profits rose by an average of 20% to 1993, and remain high. The profits of these companies are subsidised by the poorest people in Britain, those least able to pay. Thousands of households now regularly have their water supply cut off. In 1991/2, in the Sandwell Health Authority (in the West Midlands), 1400 households were cut off, leading to a ten-fold increase in cases of hepatitis and dysentry. In 1994 2 million households fell into water arrears, 12,500 were disconnected. Water companies in England and Wales are increasingly introducing pre-payment meters. This increased use of metering, which occurs more often in poorer households, results in either increased water bills, or forced cuts in water supply by those who need it most. The response of the water companies to increasing criticism of their disconnection policies has been pure PR(public relations). A tiny proportion of their inflated profits is given to charitable trusts that help the poorest customers. This tokenism also gives these corporations tax advantages. In London, the 19th century sewer system is understaffed (water companies slashed jobs after privatisation), and struggling with a vastly increased workload; it is unable to cope with 'flash floods' from road runoff which is diverted into the system after heavy rainfall. The result is periodic discharges of raw sewage into the Thames, which kill much of the river life, and threaten human health.

Britain is facing the strong possibility of another drought this summer, according to climatologists. It has just experienced the second driest winter in 50 years, and the driest since water privatisation in 1989, and a long dry spell is predicted for the summer. This will be compounded by the huge amount of water that is being lost every day through broken and leaking pipes - a fifth of the 15 billion litres that the UK water system supplies daily. On the 1st of April, household water bills in England and Wales rose by an average of £29 in an attempt to fund the necessary investment required to tackle the leakage: they would not consider funding it from their large profits, of course. The water industry is seeking deals with bottled water companies to keep supplies going, and the government appointed industry regulator (Ofwat) could impose supply restrictions if there is a lengthy drought. There are plans for eight new or enlarged reservoirs in the south-east of England. What is needed is conservation and sensible use of water, however. Scientists warn that such droughts will become increasingly common, with globak warming creating more extreme weather patterns with lengthy dry spells interspersed with intense storms.

Fighting Back

In the 1980s, and between 1994-96, anarchists played a key role in direct action community campaigns which defeated attempts to introduce water taxes in Dublin, in Southern Ireland (issue 3 of 'Red and Black Revolution', gives an excellent account and analysis of this).

For thousands of years legal and informal systems accepted and insisted that water was a communal asset that could not be privately owned. There is a long history of human societies that have developed elaborate systems that ensure fair access to water. In Spain the water communities on the Genil, Segura, and Ebro rivers are examples of solidarity and social co-operation that were created on foundations laid by the Phoenicians, the Roman Empire, and the Moors. The modern technology of pipes, pumps, and motive power makes these schemes easier. For irrigation, local control of water is all-important and can be achieved in many ways. In the small-scale irrigation schemes of eastern Spain under the Moors, water belonged to the community and was sold with the land. Continual disputes about its use in times of scarcity were regulated by a communal organisation, the huerta, in places such as Aragon. Here water belongs to farmers through whose land it passes, each water user belongs to a comunidad de regantes (association) that elects a sindico, the combination of sindicos from each zone constitutes the Water Tribunal. These meet to judge rations during scarcity; no lawyers or state laws are involved, fines are sometimes imposed, and always paid.

Conclusion

If the price mechanism continues to determine the allocation of water, the poor will die of thirst. If it decides which crops are irrigated for the market, they will starve. If it determines the availability of water for personal hygiene, vast numbers of children will die before the age of five, from illnesses such as diarrhoea. There are however many examples from around the world which show that people can co-operate to share water resources sensibly and fairly, for themselves and the environment, but only where there is common ownership and control of water.

reviews

A Day Mournful And Overcast by an "uncontrollable" from the Iron Column

Kate Shapley Library - £2, 21 pages

The Spanish Revolution of 1936 initially defeated the Fascist uprising. Militia columns put together at a moment's notice like the Iron Column were formed to fight the Fascists. But soon the Revolution began to go wrong. The Communist Party was one of those forces that undermined the Revolution. It attempted to destroy the militias and put them under state control. As the foreword to the pamphlet notes: "Militarisation was not about discipline or uniforms but about restoring power to the state."

A Day Mournful and Overcast was written by an anonymous member of the Iron Column. This column was made up mainly of "criminals" who had been released from prison with the outbreak of the Revolution. He was imprisoned when he was 23 and liberated when he was 34. He had revolted against his conditions and killed a political boss in his home village. "Many prisoners who had suffered as I had from bad treatment received since birth, were released with me. Some of them, once on the street, went their own way. Others, like myself, joined our liberators, who treated us like friends and loved us like brothers. With them we gradually formed the Iron Column, with them, at a mounting tempo, we stormed barracks and disarmed ferocious Civil Guards..." The Iron Column was one of the anarchist columns that drove back the Fascists and changed the mode of life through which they passed, wiping out the political bosses there.

This lyrical text, imbued with revolutionary fervour, is a complaint against the militarization that was being forced on the columns. As he says "Our past opposition tomilitarisation was founded on what we knew about officers. Our present opposition was founded on what we know about them now. Professional officers form, now and for all time, here and in Russia, a caste.." The Iron Column was the most intransigent of the anarchist columns against militarization. Alas, the Revolution for which they had sacrificed so much was being destroyed and swept back.

The Early Days Of Greek Anarchism: 'The Democratic Club of Patras & Social Radicalism in Greece' edited and translated by Paul Pomonis

Kate Sharpley Library - £2, 26 pages

This pamphlet charts the emergence of anarchism in Greece from the 1860s when Emmanuel Daoudoglou, under the influence of the International Workingmen's Association (First International) of Naples, where he was then staying, became an anarchist. The Russian anarchist Bakunin was living in the Naples area at the time. A number of other Greeks started developing anarchist ideas around the same time and this further developed with the influence of the Paris Commune of 1871.

Patras, a port town, had good links to Italy, and anarchists there were able to maintain links with anarchists from Italy and other parts of Europe. They attempted to form the first local section of the First International. State repression set back these endeavours for a decade. The Democratic Club of Patras included workers and intellectuals. It established contact with other groups and individuals throughout Greece. Soon after it produced a newspaper at least 4 of its members were imprisoned in 1877. Later they were acquitted of all charges against them but this caused some of them to retreat from further involvement. The remaining members had to work secretly during a long period of clandestine activity.

Later on at the end of the 19th century/ beginning of the 20th century anarcho-syndicalist groups emerged. Although Greek anarcho-syndicalism never became a mass movement (like it did in several other countries) it contributed significantly to the first major strikes in Greece and worker's organisation. Groups like the League of Anarchist Workers of Athens emerged. Anarchists were also involved in strike activities in the Lavrio mines. Meanwhile anarchism was propagated among the peasants, especially in the Peloponneseus and Thessaly. Raisin workers organised large demonstrations as a result of many of them losing their jobs and anarchists were involved in demonstrations organised by them in Achaia and Ilia. The anarchists of Pyrgos were also involved in peasant revolts and organised public debates in the villages. However, reformist ideas became dominant in this period in Greek history, and anarchism never took off the way it had in other Mediterranean countries. This little known chapter of anarchist history describes the pioneers of anarchism in Greece, where a new anarchist movement began to emerge and grow after the fall of the Colonels' dictatorship in the 70s.

The London Years by Rudolf Rocker

AK Press/Five Leaves - £14.99, 228 pages

This book, long out of print, has made a welcome return, and is published at the same time as another reprint, Bill Fishman's East London Jewish Radicals. It was written by Rudolf Rocker, a gentile German who became involved in the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement of Britain. Not only did Rocker animate the highly popular newspaper *Der Arbeter Fraint*, he was also involved in setting up the monthly *Germinal* which dealt with anarchist theory and culture "to acquaint its readers with all libertarian tendencies in modern literature and contemporary thought". Interned during the First World War he spent the rest of his life in Holland, Germany and the USA. The thriving movement that he had helped build (in London, but also in Leeds, Manchester and other northern towns) was devastated by the war, by the number of anarchists returning to Russia to assist in the Revolution, many perishing there, and by the upsurge of the Communist Party. But for several decades there was a vibrant anarchist movement among the Jewish working class in Britain.

Here is described the strike that broke out among the tailoring workers of the West End in 1912, with over 8,000 attending a meeting addressed by Rocker and others. Following this successful strike, many Jewish families took in the children of London dockers who were also on strike. This was one of the great triumphs of Rocker and the Jewish anarchist movement. This active solidarity broke down the barriers between the dockers, predominantly of Irish Catholic background, and the Yiddish speaking working class of the East End. It was a hammer-blow against anti-semitism. As Colin Ward says in the introduction: "Rudolf Rocker's own story, that of an immigrant, deprived of citizenship in his country of origin, and deported from Britain after years of internment, has its own message for another generation struggling with the dilemmas of a multi-cultural Britain".

A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism (1867-1973) by Mairtin O Cathain

Organise! (Ireland) - £2, 42pages

This fascinating pamphlet produced by the Organise! grouping in Ireland charts the history of anarchism in Belfast. It examines anarchist influences within branches of the Socialist League in the 1890s. The first specifically anarchist group in Belfast did

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reviews

Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack. The struggle for free soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921 by Alexandre Skirda

AK Press - £13.00, 415pages

"We part with the feeling that we have done our revolutionary duty. Long live solidarity and unity of the toilers! Long live the third social revolution! My thanks to all of you for everything."
Nestor Makhno's farewell address to the Makhnovist movement, July 17, 1921
The French historian Alexandre Skirda has long been an admirer of the anarchist peasant Nestor Makhno. No academic divorced from reality, he has participated in the anarchist movement from the time he fought on the barricades of Rue Gay-Lussac in the Latin Quarter of Paris in May 1968. He is an historian devoted to anarchism and this is probably his greatest book.
In an exceedingly well-researched book, Skirda uses his knowledge of both Ukrainian and Russian (his father was Ukrainian, his mother Russian) to source material in those languages. The book, first written in 1982, went through three editions with revisions and this English translation is of the 1999 edition with its substantial additions from material that had recently come to light.
Nestor Makhno was born into a poor peasant family in the town of Gulyai-Polye in the Ukraine in 1888. His father died when Nestor was only 11 months old, and his mother had to raise him in straitened circumstances. He and his four brothers worked as farmhands. Nestor moved on from this to work in a local foundry as an apprentice, and then as a sales assistant for a wine merchant. During the Russo-Japanese War, Nestor's older brother Savva was called up. The 1905 Revolution broke out and Savva started reading revolutionary literature. In 1906 he make contact with a group of peasant anarchists in Gulyai-Polye.

Despite the atmosphere of severe repression and a detachment of Don Cossacks quartered on the town, 10 to 15 anarchists met at least weekly. Nestor himself started attending group meetings and he said appreciatively of its founder, Voldemar Antoni, the son of immigrant Czech workers and a lathe operator himself, that he had rid Nestor's "soul once and for all of the lingering remnants of the slightest spirit of servility and submission to any authority".
Nestor served 10 months in prison for his activities. Undeterred, at the age of 18, he returned to work with the Gulyai-Polye anarchist-communist group. He set up an anarchist study group of 25 in a nearby village. The Gulyai-Polye group was informed upon and surrounded by gendarmes. They managed to shoot their way out. Nestor was again arrested. Four members of the group were hanged, another poisoning himself to escape the hangman. Nestor himself was sentenced to hard labour for life. In Butyrki prison in Moscow, he met another anarchist activist, Piotr Arshinov, with whom he was to have a long association.
The February Revolution of 1917 freed Nestor and he returned to the Ukraine to help set in motion a mass movement of peasants, imbued with anarchist ideas. It fought the German and Austro-Hungarian occupiers, fought the puppet Ukrainian

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The Almost Perfect Crime: The Misrepresentation of Portuguese Anarchism by Julio Carrapato

Kate Sharpley Library - £2, 13 pages

Portuguese anarchism was a little known movement that reached mass proportions. Anarchism started to spread through Portugal around 1870, but really took off around 1886 with the visit of the French geographer and anarchist Elisee Reclus. It started making strong inroads among workers circles in the cities but also in rural areas like the Alentejo where many rural labourers came over to anarchism. By 1914 a large syndicalist organisation had emerged. The syndicalist daily newspaper *A Batalha* was launched in 1919 and survived up till1927 and the Salazar dictatorship, and its sales ranked number two or three across the country!
Anarchists were extremely active in many social struggles. During the First World War, the anarchosyndicalist and anarchist organisations urged workers to desert and rioting and shootings followed. Many anarchists were deported to deadly African penal colonies during 1922 to 1926, and this repression continued with the fascist dictatorship of Salazar.

The insurrectionary general strike launched in 1934 by the CGT, the mass anarchosyndicalist union, was defeated. Many hundreds were arrested, the Tarrafal concentration camp was set up and the CGT was dismantled. Secret anarchist organisations continued their work of resistance and propaganda. The Communist Party refused to support the insurrection, and in 1935 its militants were ordered to enter the Salazarist unions!!
Portuguese anarchism re-emerged in 1974 with the Portuguese Revolution and the fall off the fascist regime. Anarchists started organising again. In fact the only unmistakably anti-militarist demonstration held in post-fascist Portugal, against the Iberian Agreement and in solidarity with Spanish workers, was organised by the anarchists. Unfortunately Portuguese anarchism has as yet not managed to turn itself into a mass movement again. This handy little pamphlet tells the story of a chapter in anarchist history which should be better known.

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not appear until1910, when John McAra, who may have discovered anarchism within the Socialist League in Edinburgh, visited Belfast to propagandise for anarchism. Whilst speaking on the steps of the Custom House he was arrested for sedition. He was sentenced to 3 months jail. The conditions there had a bad effect on his health and shortened his life by a number of years. His courage and anarchist politics were well received in Belfast. As a result of his determined work, an anarchist group was set up, supported by anarchists across the sea in Scotland.
Colourful characters like Captain Jack White, who came to anarchism through his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, and 'Slumdom' Jack McMullen, with his hatred of slum landlords, are dealt with in some depth.
The modern Belfast Anarchist Group which appeared in 1967 with the civil rights movement in the North, gathered about 20 people together. It had an often difficult relationship with Peoples Democracy, the broad civil rights movement. Eventually a split emerged among those who took an internationalist position and those who gave some support to the IRA. The Belfast Libertarian Group, who had broken with the latter, continued its criticisms of republicanism, and was threatened with kneecapping for their pains by both republicans and loyalists! Soon after the group disappeared. There this interesting little pamphlet ends. Organise! sums up: "Anarchists have our work cut out for us and many battles to fight, but fighting in the knowledge that we inherit the name and spirit of those working class militants who went before us under the banner of anarchy should encourage us, in Belfast and wherever else we may be found today".

reviews

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government, fought the forces of the Tsarist Whites. They soon clashed with the Bolsheviks. Although sometimes in military alliance with them against the Whites, the Makhnovist doctrine of free, anti-authoritarian soviets was anathema to the followers of Lenin. As the anarchist Boino said at the second regional congress of peasants, workers and fighters in Gulyai-Polye in 1919; "Whatever the cost, we must set up soviets which are beyond pressure from any and every party. Only non-party soviets of workers, freely elected, are capable of affording us new liberties and rescuing the labouring people from enslavement and oppression."

The Makhnovists fought bravely against the Whites. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks prepared to attack the Makhnovists, surrounding them without warning and shooting many of them on the spot. Their behaviour was shameful and appalling and Trotsky, the leader of the Red Army, distinguished himself with his bloodthirstiness, arrogance and deviousness. Skirda mentions in an afterword a secret order from Trotsky that the "Makhnovschina be mopped up without prevarication or hesitation and with all firmness and severity" and that this amounts to "a veritable indictment of Trotsky who stabbed the insurgents in the back and had them gunned down, whilst they were trying, with scarcely any arms or munitions, to hold the line against the White offensive". As he says these secret orders deserve to be publicised as they highlight Trotsky's role in the repression.

Sometimes Skirda's enthusiasm gets in the way of a critical analysis of the Makhnovists. Just what was the relation between the military groups of the Makhnovists and the mass of peasants? How did the peasant soviets and committees relate to the military groups and to Makhno himself? Makhno's haste in shooting down insurgents guilty of infractions without having looked into their cases thoroughly are touched upon and Skirda agrees that this is the most considerable of charges against Makhno.

Skirda goes into great length about the animosity between Makhno and the anarchist activist and historian Voline. Whatever Voline's faults (not least his cooking up of Synthesist anarchism) he was a sincere revolutionary and adopted a courageous internationalist position during World War II, when he was forced to live underground in southern France (which led to a premature death due to malnutrition and TB just a few days after the Liberation). Much of what Skirda says about Voline may be true, but he surely does not deserve this consistent attack on him that adds up to a virtual character assassination.

Finally some words on the translation; Paul Sharkey has done a good job translating over 400 pages into English, but the standard of proof-reading means some blinding mistakes are produced. For instance, the fiery female anarchist Marussia Nikiforova becomes male on page 100! What's worse, she becomes a Bolshevik commissar on page 97! A careful reading of the original French text would have revealed that the commissar and Nikiforova were two different people especially as later in the book there is a whole paragraph on her and her anarchist beliefs.

That said, the Makhnovist movement and Makhno himself are extremely important, interesting and inspiring, and deserve the in-depth treatment that Skirda has given them. Everyone should read this book, especially all Leninists (go on, maybe it will finally open your eyes!).

Friends and neighbours

If you like what you read in Organise! you might be interested in these:

SchNEWS - Direct action news sheet. Send stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2 2DX

Direct Action - Anarcho-syndicalist magazine produced by the Solidarity Federation. £2.00 issue/£5 subs PO Box 29, SWPDO, M15 5HW

Freedom: Anarchist Fortnightly - Under new management! Now more anarchist-communist influenced and worth a read. From Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX. Send a pound for an issue.

Earth First! Action Update - Monthly news from Earth First! £5 for 12 issue sub. PO Box 487, Norwich, NR2 3AL

Collective Action Notes - Bulletin produced by CAN. Information on struggles worldwide. Contact PO Box 22962 Baltimore, MD 212, USA.

NEFAC, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists - Probably the group closest to us politically. Write to either NEFAC (English speaking), Roundhouse Collective, c/o Black Planet radical Books, 1621 Fleet St., Baltimore MD 21231, USA or NEFAC (Francophone), Groupe Anarchists Emile-Henry, C.P. 55051, 138 St- Valliers O., Quebec G1K 1JO, Canada. Alternatively, you can link to them from our website (www.afed.org.uk).

Resistance

Resistance is our monthly news sheet. Our widespread distribution of Resistance means more and more people are coming into contact with revolutionary anarchist ideas. This is at a time when the Labour Party, the Trotskyist and Stalinist left are spiralling rapidly downwards into decline. There is a real chance of building a credible anarchist movement in this country - with consistent and dogged hard work.

If you would like the next 12 issues of Resistance, then send POs, cheques for £4 payable to:

'AF' to: AF, PO Box 375, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU21 2XL.

Better still, take a bundle to distribute!

obituaries

Antonio Téllez Solá

1921-2005, anarchist militant and historian.

Born in Tarragona in 1921, Téllez saw action on several fronts as a young anarchist militia man at the ripe old age of 18, during the Spanish Civil War. He took part in the French maquis during the Second World War. In 1944 he took part in a resistance invasion of Spain via the Aran Valley. He was involved in clandestine organisation in Spain after 1945. He was also a comrade of many of the legendary anarchist fighters against Franco, people like Francisco Sabaté Llopart and José Luis Facerias. Having turned to journalism to earn his living in exile, he began a career as a prolific author in the "Fight for History", rescuing the story of the anti-Franco resistance from obscurity. As well as biographies of Sabaté and Facerias, he produced books on Francisco Ponzán Vidal (the "Anarchist Pimpernel"), The MIL, Puig Antich and numerous articles for the libertarian press.

Téllez himself said, in an introduction to "The Anarchist Resistance to Franco: Biographical Notes": "Any small selection of names among hundreds of thousands of victims is arbitrary.... [But] with the presentation of some names, with their physical image, we would like to remember all those who fell in the struggle against tyranny, in defence of Freedom."

Chris Pallis

Chris Pallis came from a wealthy Anglo-Greek family. Born in Bombay, he received most of his schooling in Switzerland and was fluent in English, Greek and French. In 1941 he began to study for medicine. He joined the Communist Party and was expelled almost immediately for its positions on the Second World War. He gravitated towards the Revolutionary Communist Party which united practically all the Trotskyists in Britain at that time (it included in its ranks people like Ted Grant, Tony Cliff, and Gerry Healy, all of whom went on to found their own parties). In the mid-50s he took up an appointment at Hammersmith Hospital. He joined the Socialist Labour League, set up by Gerry Healy, which later became the Workers Revolutionary Party. He served on its national committee. In 1960 he participated in the expulsion of Ken Weller, a young London engineer and shop steward, who had grave doubts about the authoritarian behaviour of the SLL. This was part of the ongoing fight by Healy to purge the organisation of its critics, grouped around Brian and Celia Behan. Within a few months, Pallis too had left the SLL. He and Bob Pennington started having grave doubts about the SLL themselves and were summoned to a meeting of the London Executive Committee, where Pennington was subjected to a 20-minute diatribe from Healy, consisting entirely of personal abuse. When he and Pallis tried to leave, they were forcibly prevented and physically assaulted. Disgusted with Healy's methods, Pennington and Pallis renounced Trotskyism and founded the Socialism Re-Affirmed Group, which got into contact with the French libertarian socialist group Socialisme ou Barbarie and then changed its name to Solidarity. Pennington was to return to Trotskyism but Pallis grouped a number of other ex-SLL members around him like Weller, Bob Potter and John Lawrence.

The Solidarity group began to publish a duplicated magazine of the same name around 3 to 6 times a year. The group also produced some 60 pamphlets and 4 books. As well as providing some interesting translations by Pallis of Paul Cardan (the pen name of Cornelius Castoriadis, one of the leading lights of Socialisme ou Barbarie) the group produced many in-depth analyses of various strikes. As a result Solidarity had some respect and circulation among industrial militants.

Pallis had a direct, accessible and often humorous style. He produced interesting accounts of the Belgian General Strike of 1960-61, May 1968 in France and the Portuguese Revolution in 1975-6. But his most remembered works will probably prove to be the Irrational in Politics (which was really a popularisation of some of Wilhelm Reich's ideas) and the Bolsheviks and Workers Control.

As a neurologist and brain surgeon, Pallis made many important contributions to medicine, especially on brainstem death. It is rumoured that Rudi Dutschke, the radical German student leader, who had been shot in the head by a right-wing would-be assassin, trusted only Pallis to remove the bullet from his head when he was operated on in Britain. In the last 20 years or so, Pallis moved away from active politics as the result of the onset of Parkinson's disease. He left a lasting impression however, and his funeral was attended by many who had been in Solidarity or who had come into contact with him through the anarchist movement.

Pallis and the Solidarity group had an important and mostly positive influence on the British libertarian movement, and produced some of its most important theoretical contributions between 1960 to 1980.

John Crump

John Crump died at the beginning of March at the early age of 60. Best known to Anarchist Federation members and Organise! readers as the author of our pamphlet *The Anarchist Movement in Japan*, he had been active in the socialist and libertarian movement since the early 1960s.

He started his political life in the Socialist Party of Great Britain and for some time was one of the editors of their magazine the Socialist Standard. In the early 1970s a significant number of younger members began to develop a libertarian communist critique of the SPGB. John was involved in this current and eventually left the SPGB after a number of others had been expelled. He helped form the libertarian group Social Revolution and wrote a number of articles for its publications, Libertarian Communism and Social Revolution. He eventually went to live in Japan, but continued to contribute articles from there. In the late 1970s he wrote a pamphlet, A Contribution to the Critique of Marx, which was published jointly by Social Revolution and Solidarity. This pamphlet can be found on our northern website, www.af-north.org.

John was unhappy with the eventual merger of Social Revolution and Solidarity and took no further part in those groups. His next important contributions were two books. In 1986 he helped write a critique of the Russian economy "State Capitalism: The Wages System under New Management". He co-edited with Maximilien Rubel a book "Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (1987). In this he argued that there exists a "thin red line of non-market socialism", which includes all those tendencies arguing for a stateless, moneyless, classless society.

When the Subversion group was formed in the late 80s, he again helped. This time he wrote a pamphlet on the Japanese economy and delivered a seminar at a day school in Manchester.

Those of us who knew John valued him for the basic sense of his views and the straightforward way he expressed them. He made many in Britain aware of the contribution of Japanese anarchists, whilst at the same time doing much to argue against sectarianism and narrow mindedness. His lasting contribution was to help others see the links that unite those of us in "the thin red line". He will be missed.

Organise!
...on the net

Articles from Organise! can be found on the internet at http://www.afed.org.uk
You can also e-mail us at organise@afed.org.uk

letters

Dear Organise!

The article in the last issue which sketched some of the anarchist activity of the last 20 years was very interesting for those of us who've been active throughout that period. In addition to the groups, papers and issues that were flagged up there's a very wide range of anarchist and anarchist-influenced activities which could and should also be acknowledged. For example, off the top of my head (many from my own knowledge): Claimants Unions (at least up to the early '90s); London Greenpeace (a strong anarchist social/ecological group active for 30yrs) including its offshoot the successful international anti-McDonald's/McLibel campaign; the Stop The City anti-capitalist protests ('83-4); the anti-militarist mass blockades and camps in the early/mid 80s; Reclaim The Streets and their inspirational street takeovers which morphed into the international anti-capitalist days of action including putting Mayday back on the map; 20 yrs of the Earth First! movement (including direct action campaigns, and inspirational annual gatherings) plus the whole anti-road building movement and direct action camps; SchNews of course (weekly for 10 years); the animal liberation movement; regional anarchist networks/ conferences (eg the Northern @ Network); anarcha-feminist networks and events; social centres and bookshops networks; the incredible anti-poll tax mass campaign, in particular the independent tendencies and the highly significant Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign (which also led to the still-existing Legal Defence Monitoring Group); other anti-repression campaigns and prisoner support (including the Anarchist Black Cross). And of course the annual Anarchist Bookfair (and a number of local ones too) attended by thousands ofpeople, a testament to the wide range of anarchist publications and distribution networks (also including music, videos etc) etc.

Many of the above groups and movements have also worked hard to form local, countrywide and international alliances and networks, and to promote informational and communication channels, and also general debate. But most importantly there are dozens of local anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups (like in Bristol, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Haringey, Walthamstow, Norwich, Nottingham, Worthing...). These are the backbone of the anarchist movement, active week in and week out, with a loose, total 'membership' of maybe 2-3000 people at any one time. Over the last 20 years local groups have produced between them an average of maybe 300,000 leaflets and local agitational newspapers each year, plus organising regular local meetings, mailouts, e-lists, centres, protests, strike support, stalls, support for single issue campaigns and forming links at a community-based level etc.

Let's all recognise, support and encourage those involved and the work they are doing, and look forward to an active local anarchist/solidarity collective in every borough, town and village. By being involved in local issues, campaigns and communities - including promoting workplace and community self-organisation as a prelude and preparation for people taking control of all decision-making and resources themselves - the anarchist movement will earn the respect and influence that we all strive for.

In solidarity to you all out there, beavering away...

Dave, of Haringey Solidarity Group

Writing to Organise!

Send your letter to Organise! by writing to
Organise!, AF-IAF London, BCM ANARFED, London, WC1 3XX
Alternatively you can email us at: **organise@afed.org.uk**

Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It: Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies? German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Other Anarchist Federation publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

Anarchism As We See It - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.50 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

Against Parliament, for Anarchism - £1 - Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.

Basic Bakunin - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto - £1.50 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

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Ecology and Class: Where There's Brass, There's Muck - £2 - Our newly-revised and extended pamphlet on ecology.

Stormy Petrel Pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti - 75p (plus p+p) - writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence - 50p (plus p+p) - an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society.

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956 - 60p (plus p+p) - An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement.

afanasy nikolaevich matiushenko, the potemkin mutineer

revolutionary portraits

Afanasy Matiushenko was the son of peasants from Kharkov province in Russia. Born in 1879, he served in the Russia Navy in the Black Sea Fleet from the age of 21. He started as a machinist and became a non-commissioned officer. He was a member of a secret group of the Social Revolutionary Party. He was called up as a naval reservist on the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5. He kept in contact with his group on land and served on the Battleship Potemkin as torpedo quartermaster. He spread propaganda among the crew of the Potemkin and other ships of the Black Sea Fleet and succeeded in forming several revolutionary cells. Rudolf Rocker, who met him, describes him as a "good-natured, smiling Russian peasant type; about medium height, and powerfully built."

When the crew of the Potemkin complained to the ship's officers about the poor food being served, Matiushenko called for an armed uprising on June 14th, 1905. Here are Matiushenko's own words on the start of the Potemkin mutiny. "Hearing of the unrest among the crew, the Captain of the Potemkin... sent the senior surgeon of the ship...to examine the meat. He approached the meat, put on his pince-nez so as to see the maggots better, twisted it around in front of his face, sniffed and said that the meat was very good, that the crew was merely faddy and therefore did not want to eat it. All that was necessary was to wash off the maggots with water, and the meat would be excellent... Captain Golikov ordered a sentry to be stationed by the meat...the sentry was instructed to write down the names of all who came to look at the meat, and afterwards to report them to the Captain."

The captain ordered that the ringleaders be shot. Matiushenko appealed to the guard with the words: "Comrades, don't forget your oath, don't shoot at our own men." The muzzles of the rifles dropped to the deck - they had refused to shoot. Matiushenko shouted: "Comrades, look what they are doing to our fellows! Grab rifles and cartridges,

shoot them down, the swine." The sailors rushed to the gun deck, seized rifles, loaded them and ran out to their comrades who stood surrounded by the guard. Captain Golikov threw himself on Matiushenko with the order "Drop your weapons". Matiushenko replied "I will drop my weapons when I am no longer a living being but a corpse. Get off the ship. This is the people's ship and not yours." Matiushenko found Chief Officer Giliarovsky with a rifle in his hand, standing over the corpse of the sailor Vakulinchuk, who had been killed by him, and had been among those sentenced to be shot. Gilliarovsky shot at Matiushenko, missed and turned to run. Matiushenko shot him down. The officers were thrown overboard. Matiushenko was elected chairman of the Ship Committee. The Potemkin sailed into Odessa harbour. A revolt had broken out in the city. A mass of workers welcomed the Potemkin. Vakulinchuk's body was brought on shore and surrounded by a huge crowd. As events unfolded, soldiers and police fired on the crowd, killing 2,000. The following morning, the funeral of Vakulinchuk took place. The authorities, terrified at further unrest, agreed immunity to sailors' delegates to head the procession, including Matiushenko. In the evening, the Potemkin fired five shells at the Town Theatre where the Military Council was meeting. A spy on board deliberately misaimed the shells. The Black Sea squadron was now sent from Sevastopol to quell the mutiny. The Potemkin ship committee went by their accompanying torpedo boat to one of the cruisers, the George, arrested the officers and put them ashore. The crew of the George joined the mutiny. However, unreliable petty officers left on board the George succeeded in persuading the crew to change their mind. The Potemkin was forced to sail to Constanta in Romania, where the mutineers scuppered it and sought refuge ashore.

After the revolt ended, Matiushenko moved from Romania to Switzerland. He became a member of the United Sailors' Committee and lived in Romania in 1906. In 1907 he went to France, where he became involved in anarcho-syndicalist activity in Paris. He visited London and met with anarchists like the Russian Piotr Kropotkin and the German Rudolf Rocker, who organised among the Jewish workers of the East End of London. Kropotkin's Russian language paper, Listki Chlieb I Wolia had its printing office in the same apartment block of Dunstan Houses in Stepney where Rocker and many Jewish anarchists lived.

Matiushenko felt unhappy and out of touch in London. He moved from there to Canada but felt driven to return to Russia. He returned to England. His friends there warned him of the dangers he would face if he returned to Russia. He refused to listen to this advice. In June 1907 he returned to Russia, intending to carry out anarchist communist activity in the city of Odessa. On July 3rd of that year he was arrested in Nikolaev. A military court convicted him of being an anarchist-communist and sentenced him to death (he was one of the 167 anarchists and anarchist "sympathisers" tried in Odessa during 1906-7 of whom 30 were hanged). He was hanged in Sevastopol on October 20th, 1907. He died like the brave man he was.

Aims and principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aim and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps just would just like to be put on our mailing list.

Whatever you want to find out from us, please get in touch.

Write to our national contact at:

AF-IAF London, BCM ANARFED, London, WC1 3XX

Alternatively you can email us at **info@afed.org.uk** or visit or website: **www.afed.org.uk**

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Organise!

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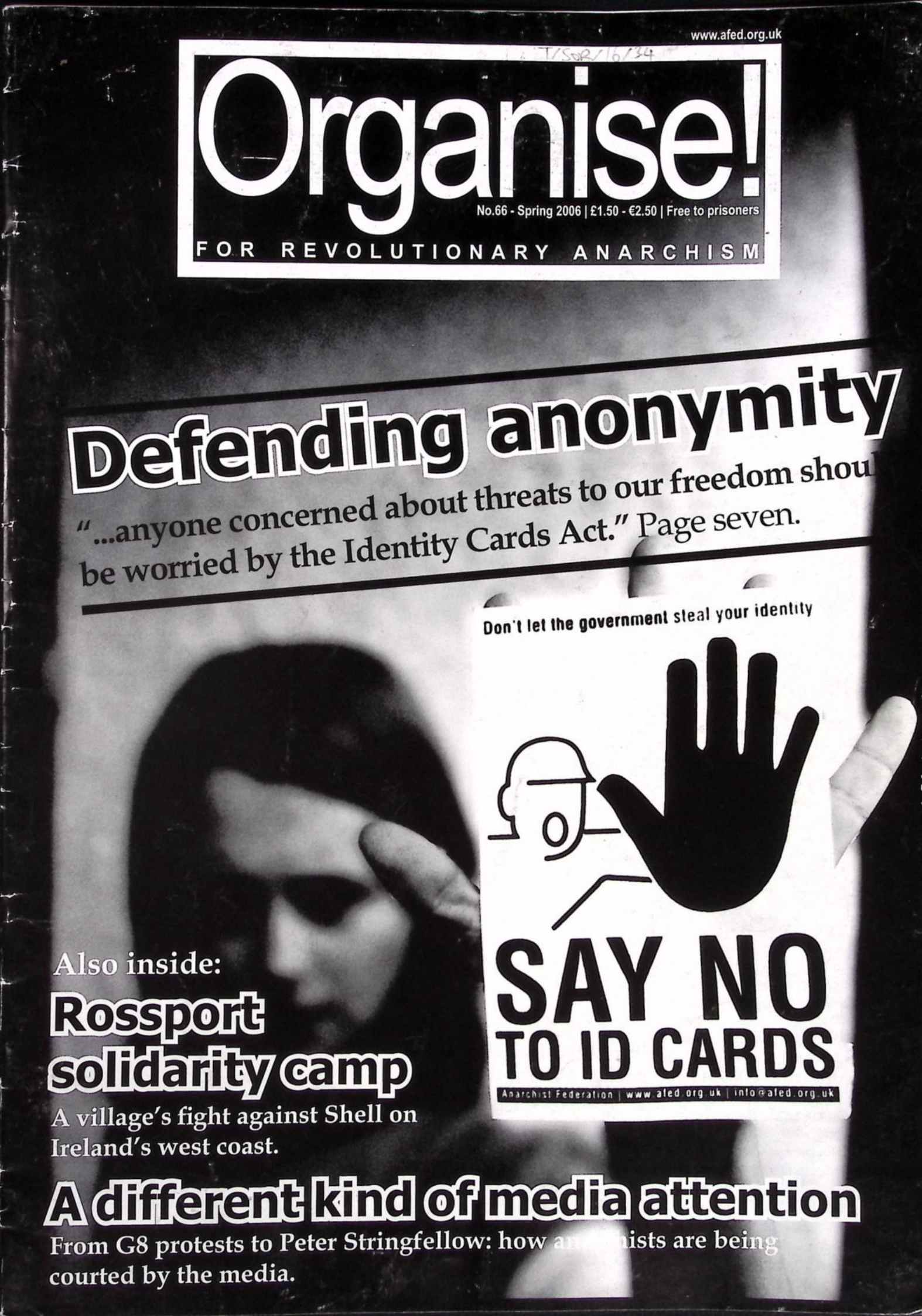
FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

Defending anonymity

"...anyone concerned about threats to our freedom shou be worried by the Identity Cards Act." Page seven.



Also inside:

Rossport solidarity camp

A village's fight against Shell on Ireland's west coast.

A different kind of media attention

From G8 protests to Peter Stringfellow: how an[illegible]ists are being courted by the media.

Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 15th August 2006. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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editorial

The Anarchist Federation is now in its 20th year and we are especially pleased to bring you the first of this year's Organise! magazine. Thanks to all those who have read and contributed to the paper, and supported the press fund.

The end of our second decade coincides with a number of other important anniversaries: the General Strike in Britain 1926, the high point of the Spanish Revolution in 1936 and the Hungarian Revolution against the 'Soviet' invasion of 1956. We will keep the full celebrations for next issue with articles on Hungary and the General Strike. For this issue we offer a piece about the legacy of Spain in the 1930s, one of the most important examples of the influence of anarchist ideas and action in living memory. We also provide a host of revolutionary portraits, pamphlet reviews and sadly, further obituaries, of both lesser and more well-known anarchist lives.

But Organise! is not only about the old - in this issue we report and analyse a vibrant community campaign against a oil pipeline in Rossport on the West coast of Ireland, and interview an IWW member about opposition to 'mountain top removal' strip-mining in West Virginia, USA. We also reproduce an interview with the Venezuelan anarchists who are attempting to come to terms with the Chavez 'revolution' which is becoming more and more statist and militaristic by the minute. There too, indigenous communities are coming to further realise the reality of state dependence on the profits of powerful multinational mining companies like Anglo-Amercian (Tarmac in UK). This environmental destruction is being continued and promoted by the leftist Chavista regime just as before under the right-wing. At government level, money always talks, whatever the colour of the flag.

In Britain, as western warmongering continues in the Middle East, our freedom to speak out and act against our increasingly authoritarian state has been weakened by new laws, bans, and the looming threat of a national identity scheme. Anarchists need to do more to help make the ID scheme into Labour's 'Poll Tax', and to this end we provide both analysis and some thoughts for action. Likely imposition of more nuclear power and weapons will require additional efforts by our movement, and this is sure to be a newsworthy issue in the coming year. But as our article on the media and academia will assert, we will have to be careful not to be sucked into struggling through second-hand propaganda and spectacular stunts. As the state gets more oppressive, neither must we forget the prisoners who are fighting the system from within their cages, and we print an impassioned call for more prisoner support.

As we write this editorial, widespread protests and other anti-government activites have continued in France against the 'Anglo-Saxon' (read Thatcherite) austerity measures which are threatening the livelihoods of young workers, now the government has proposed to allow companies to sack you after 2 years for no reason, if you are under 26. The fight is on within Europe to protect past gains, whilst we must ensure solidarity with migrant workers who are being exploited by the current economic system, and highlight the class war over dangerous racist and religious diversions.

A mass meeting of anarchists and socialists in revolutionary Barcelona. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish revolution.

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Please return to Organise! address on page two

venezuela 2006: anarchism against all odds

By Comisión de Relaciones Anarquistas (CRA), Venezuela

"Our friends from abroad continuously ask us to explain our views about the current situation in Venezuela. This reply is based on two* recent texts by the editing team of El Libertario, already published in their entirety in the internet (in Spanish), and from which we extract our main points." Talking about the Venezuelan situation, from an interview with La Rosa Negra – counterinfo from Mexico in January 2006.

RN: We know that you fight in three fronts: a) against pseudo-leftist Chavista groups in power; b) against the anti-Chavez opposition directed by the social democrats and the right; and c) against groups or parties of the traditional left. Could there be a ghetto imposed by the state, the right and its social democrat allies and the traditional left for anarchists in your country, or is a retreat necessary?

CRA: Whatever the socio-political situation in any given country is, those who wield or want to wield power will try to curb any symptom of consistent libertarian struggle by building "ghettoes" of repression, open or hidden, where to confine it. It is natural for the anarchist militant to confront the intentions of the powers that be, it is a task we must carry on without fail, and above all, without resigning ourselves to the supposedly inevitable condition of being excluded. In no way does the CRA retreat or hide within our shell waiting for better times, and whoever has direct contact with our activities or simply reads El Libertario with due attention and frequency, will find enough evidence that we're not a group who stares at its own navel.

RN: We get the impression that the triumph of abstention in the past elections (12/4/05) and the retreat of civil struggle groups towards "no participation" is fertile ground for the forceful imposition of state (Chavista) initiatives. Is this perception true?

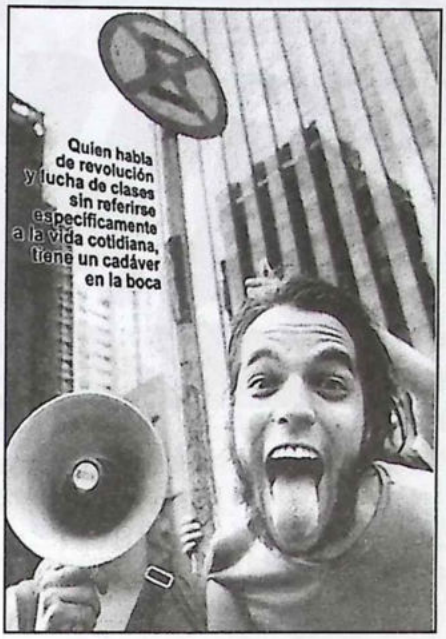
CRA: We make clear that according to the government's own statistics abstention, understood as the no participation in an electoral process of sectors of the population that could rightfully vote by virtue of being Venezuelan citizens and having the age to vote, has been the norm in all elections in this country since 1989, even during the referendum to recall the president in 2004, when the gangs from the political opposition and the demagogue government made a supreme effort to bring the incredulous masses to the polls. It is an error to qualify as civil struggle groups certain figureheads of the opposition that opportunistically gamble with abstention today, they aren't in any way representative of real social forces in Venezuela. As to the rest, no doubt the Chavez regime tries to impose state control mechanisms everywhere, but being such a corrupt and inept government, blinded by thinking that is building solid popular support turning part of the poorest people into clients dependent on the state's dole, it's going to cost them plenty to make any advances in that contradictory chimera that it calls "XXI Century Socialism", which is nothing but an underdeveloped capitalism of the XIX Century.

RN: Likewise, we think that the Venezuelan anarchists' struggle became trapped in a sea of supposedly anti-imperialist propaganda, promoted by what we at LRN call the Kirchner-Chavez-Morales-Castro axis. Is this true? And if it is, will the Venezuelan anarchist resistance need to double its effort?

CRA: We can't understand how that perception exists, anybody who's followed our actions and our thinking will find that we have not been duped by the fallacious "you're with Chavez or else you're with Bush", as we have clearly shown evidence to dismantle this farce. It hasn't been easy to uphold this position that smashes the simplistic schemes that have led the Latin-American left from failure to failure for over 80 years, and multiplying our efforts to keep our position has been the order of the day, but our consistency begins to produce results, undoubtedly modest but full of hope that fall within the renewed activity and presence of anarchism in South America, still a minority political expression but one that has made advances between the decade of the 90's and today that are, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking, very important compared to what happened during the five or six previous decades. The challenge is to transform this modest renaissance into the ability to make a significant mark on the process for positive social change sorely needed in our continent.

RN: The Kirchner-Chavez-Morales-Castro axis has several faces: it presents itself as the triumph of parliamentary democracy and conversely, as the standard of struggle against the empire, as mediator of popular social movements and consequently, as the catalyst for civil resistance. What defensive wall do the Venezuelan anarchists have?

CRA: You're asking us about our main proposal for action right now. Let's quote a paragraph from our editorial of El Libertario #44: "We are not, nor do we want to be, contenders for the control of institutionalized power: we are anarchists and we aspire to the disappearance of state power and any other oppressive hierarchical structure. This is not just a profession of faith; our actions here and now mean assuming the commitment to promote and empower the autonomy of any social movement consistent with the ideal. Therefore, we are not interested in building 'anarchist social movements' that would prove as useless to collective progress as the Bolivarian circles or those opposition parties disguised as NGO's. We bet on social movements that build the dynamics for independent action and organization, based on the widest participation on all levels that will allow the formation of



different modes of direct action and self-management away from the state's control or any other instance of oppression, it is the only way to consolidate spaces of freedom, equality and solidarity that will be the seed and support of the future we struggle for. Our position can be summarized with these words from John Holloway: to change the world without taking power".

RN: In view of this, does the CRA-El Libertario think a wider effort to spread anarchist ideas is called for?

CRA: Considering Venezuelan history, this educational task is a priority, because we have an environment where ignorance of libertarian ideals was almost totally absolute. After 10 years of activity we can point at some successes in this area, but they are hardly the beginning and there's still much to do, so the spreading of anarchist thought is still a constant problem for those of us in this collective, and we invite all to get to know our work, getting in touch with us, personally or via email, visiting our locals and social clusters where we do our activities – such as the Centro de Estudios Sociales Libertarios of Caracas, www.centrosocial.contrapoder.org.ve and getting information about the CRA and El Libertario.

*We include only the second of the texts. The first, Neither shameful anarchism nor shameless anti-imperialism: a reply to P. Moras, can be found online.

Email CRA-El Libertario: ellibertario@nodo50.org
Web: http://www.nodo50.org/ellibertario/seccioningles.htm

Some recent news from a UK source: The indigenous 'anti-mining coalition' in Zulia have been demanding a hearing with Chavez. Last April, when a mobilisation of thousands went to Caracas to speak to Chavez about the threat of coal mining, Chavez was unable to see them because he was meeting the football legend Maradona! Lobbying is not enough. Anglo-American mining giant is a major player in the plans the Venezuelan Government has for Zulia which will destroy tropical forests and contaminate the water supply of the entire population. Their AGM is in London in April. Lusbie Portillo is a key figure in the anti-mining resistance. He appreciates international letters of solidarity, and passes them on to the indigenous communities affected (Wayuu, Yukpa, Bari and Japreria). His address is Prof. Lusbi Portillo, Homo et Natura, Calle Carabobo No. 7-34 Maracaibo, Zulia Venezuela. Email homoetnatura@cantv.net

See also: The Alternative Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela: A World Made of Many Worlds (Feb 2006): http://upsidedownworld.org/main/content/view/198/1/ which states, "...behind the anti-imperial rhetoric of the Bolivarian government, Chavez has in fact signed over the biggest concessions since the 1940's to transnational corporations and oil giants such as ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, Repsol, and Shell."

empowering prisoners through contact

Amidst the suffering and oppression, prisons are schools and the most important teachers of rebellion are prisoners.

Most of these 'instructors' didn't get convicted as a result of direct actions against government, nor are they there by way of astute political consciousness. But, all prisoners are political, as incarceration is a major component of the state. Concomitantly, many prisoners thirst for a re-energising awareness of self and society. It's a two-way street: we must learn from them and help teach those looking to learn. To do this we must collaborate with revolutionary prisoners regardless of when they acquired their insightfulness and support them in struggles against their captors which is the common class-enemy of us all, inside and out. Oppressed people have a natural awareness and desire to combat their oppressors whether they belong to a political grouping or not. Revolutions require committed. fearless participants and prisoners fit the bill perfectly.

With burgeoning prison populations in the West (2.2 million in America alone), there is a huge pool of potential revolutionaries to be drawn from prisons in any country. So it's no wonder that censorship is so heavy and political activity is dealt with so harshly by 'gulag' authorities. It used to be illegal to educate slaves because of fears that their enlightenment would lead to revolt. The same still holds true today, hence the restrictions on permitted reading material in many jails worldwide.

The relatively few imprisoned in the Western hemisphere specifically for their political ambitions deserve respect, attention and, of course. our support. Then again

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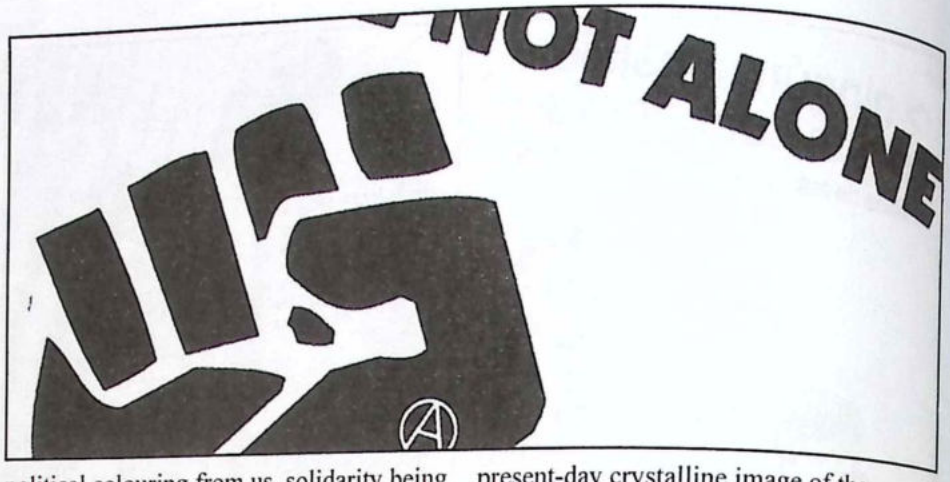
so do all the other prisoners, especially those putting themselves in harm's way to fight the system head on, to educate and assist their fellow prisoners whilst attempting boldly to work with activists on the outside. To take just two renowned examples, Malcolm X and George Jackson didn't enter the prison gates as political incendaries; their crimes were being young, male and black. But it is irrefutable they both became political doing their time. It is a premise that applies universally to black and white alike.

As (hopefully!) serious anarchists focussing on prisons, it behooves us to extend support to all prisoners, irrespective of their political development, to work closely with the agitators in spreading the truth far and wide, inside and out. Perhaps more important on a personal level is to absorb these lessons ourselves and have this heightened awareness drive our activities even harder. For the truth is revolutionary, empowering and motivating; an invaluable lesson for everyone that can help overcome fear in face of seemingly overwhelming odds which is typical of the oppression experienced by prisoner comrades each and every day of their term, long or short.

The greed and rapaciousness of capitalism is sickening; few remain ignorant of its consequences nor of how dire the situation is, nor that it will inevitably get worse as globalisation seduces and sedates people by brainwashing, drug addiction and a vacuous consumerist culture saturated largely by the omnipotent brainmelt of television and through mass stunts such as Live8*. What better way to get the message across to people in general by a reality-check on how society's refusers are brought to heel and locked away and out of sight in the hellholes which are its prisons? Who is best equipped to articulate these truths that brothers and sisters wrung from the ghettos, barrios, reservations and working-class neighbourhoods, forced to deal with this constant nightmare day in, day out, who are friendless if we don't bother to support them? As Malcolm X said "America means prison". Well, the ideology has been exported now; to protest or buck the system anywhere leads to invisibility - if we let it! Gaining respect of the militantly conscious prisoners is not only very important, it legitimises anarchist political engagement. But it can only occur through dedicated, constant, consistent and reliable work. It also has to be unqualified and authentic; comrades in prison must have complete freedom to express themselves without



political colouring from us, solidarity being a founding principle of anarchism. Prisoner support is solidarity in action. That doesn't mean we can't offer our own opinions, analysis or indeed anything else as occasion demands. People deserve to have their say without being subject to interruption. Everyone can decide in their own minds where they derive insight and how they want to approach revolution. By taking this tack anarchy stands upright and strong. Non-anarchist revolutionaries will gain respect for what anarchists do when we reach out to them without imposing conditions or behaving like preachers and know-it-alls.

As those who have had any length of contact with prisoners on a regular basis know, prisoners excel in all facets of knowledge and culture. The most powerful writers, artists, psychologists, researchers, poets, letter-writers and so forth, all emanate with profundity from behind bars. Hitherto hidden, undiscovered creativity flourishes out of the depths of even the most brutal environment. It is utterly rewarding to help a prisoner friend develop a genuine anarchist understanding and perspective. Seeing their gratitute and brave determination to mount a challenge to their own deprivations, go beyond superficial divisions of race and colour, recognise the class to which they irrevocably belong and resist the torment of government-sanctioned punishment is inspiring stuff. It can be among the main building blocks of 'thinking and doing' resolve which is, of course, the very root of anarchism. Inside and out, we are all prisoners of the state, of authority, in myriad countless ways and, at the end of they day, if things are ever going to change, we're all in this together. We have to deal with it. It's people helping each other self-educate, stretching out a hand in the direction of a comrade and vice versa. It's crucially important.

Incarceration is the black hole of society. Prisons are the concentrated core of states everywhere. It can be presumed for the present-day crystalline image of the dominant state on Earth - America - that its inhuman face is Abu Ghraib**; the whole world knows that it is far from a pretty sight. That much is visible. That much we know. Our comrades in prisons already knew this and they could have told us for the asking. Next week, next year, a decade hence, it may well be us. The stakes are the same for us all.

It must not be allowed to become intimidating. Taking a lead from our unfortunate imprisoned comrades we can stand together against the monster devouring all in its path and in its wake. Resist! There is a whole world of humanity and defiance buried away unseen in the gulags of 'civilisation'. Reach out, and you will find once you start to write to prisoners and connect with them on various levels and deepen into a person taking serious reality-checks on what is going on all around concealed and camouflaged, that there is a common bond and few differences between us. The same enemy - capitalism - confronts us all. Mutual aid, respect for one another, can win us the world we want.

Special thanks to Anthony Rayson of Chicago ABC for a lifetime's service to the fallen amongst us.

Contact the AF about getting involved with prisoner support or email the 325 collective at 325collective@hush.com. Check out links to prisoner support organisation through our website www.libcom.org/hosted/af/prison/

Organise! is free to prisoners. You can also buy a subscription to support a prisoner and help the AF at the same time. See page three for more information.

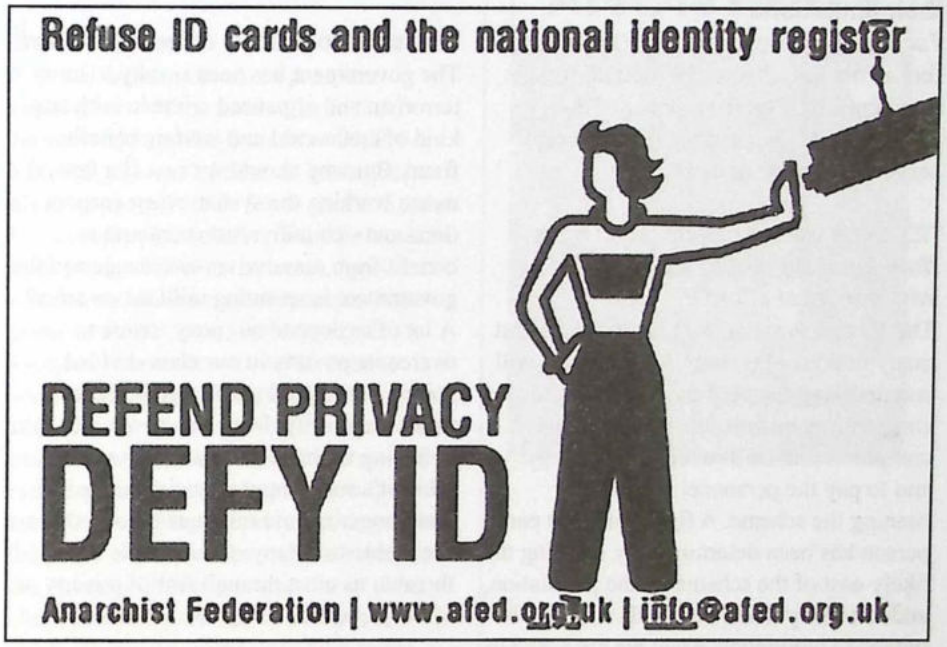
* so called anti-poverty concert but actually pro-G8 event in UK.

** Saddam Hussein's torturous prison, built by Britain in the 1960s, currently in the service of Western military forces and the new Iraqi authorities. Now set to close, but where will the prisoners end up?

fighting labour's identity card and database plans

The Labour Party has steamed ahead with its national identity scheme and anyone concerned about threats to our freedom from an increasingly authoritarian state should be worried by the Identity Cards Act, which has been passed with little change from what the government wanted in spite of all the 'write to your MP' lobbying by No2ID and optimistic hopes of House of Lords amendments.

The so-called electronic identity, eID, is just one part of European and American efforts to impose national identity schemes across the western world. Bush has already pushed this through the US Senate as an enhanced driving license known as RealID, tacked on to a military spending bill that was unlikely to get voted down in the middle of a war, and is demanding biometric passports for non-visa entry to the country. This side of the atlantic, European paranoia about borders is helping to drive EU-wide developments of passports, ID cards and databases.



Creeping compulsion

In Britain, Labour was determined to get compulsory cards in place within the next few years, starting off by forcing you to have an ID card when you apply for a passport. This will now be the case from 2010. Until then applicants will be able to 'opt out' of having an actual card, but from 2008-9 personal information will still be placed in the National Identity Register, which is in many ways worse than being made to have a card. Identity and Passport Service offices for in-person applications, vetting and biometric scanning will be built around the country starting this year.

Plus, it's not only about one government Act. State officials have taken advice from their industry partners that they will need to tread carefully and bring this in step-by-step. Plans are already in place to create a 'co-ordinated online role of electors' (CORE) and to encourage payment of council tax through an internet scheme called Government Connect. These will both involve gathering local lists into national ones, ideal for building the National Identity Register which is a core part of Labour's ID scheme. Moreover, the new Children Act allows creation of separate databases for all children, that could easily turn into ID cards for everyone as this generation ages – one estimate is 50% of the population could be covered within 20 years! Mandatory fingerprinting as well as facial biometrics (which will start to be gathered later this year in UK) are looking more likely for all passport and travel documents within the EU. Even if you don't need a passport, only one more act of parliament will be needed to force ID registration and cards on everyone over 16 years old.

Standing up and not being counted

Although ID is coming through in an incremental manner, the time to start fighting is now. The Poll Tax came in and was still defeated here from taking notice and learning from opposition to the initial trials in Scotland, and applying them to build a countrywide campaign. ID schemes have already been defeated in Australia, Canada, Korea, Taiwan and elsewhere. We would do well to look at how these examples of opposition worked before, since an international effort may well be needed. If it is to succeed, the campaign now needs to move beyond complaining what is bad about ID and prepare for concerted refusal and outright revolt.

Unfortunately the situation is not exactly like the Poll Tax of 15 years ago, when there was a clear benefit to individuals refusing to pay, because the government has strongly linked the scheme to national security as well as to the emotive threat of 'identity theft'. They hope they will convince many law-abiding citizens it will be a price worth paying. The high cost to individuals may well help convince a lot of people to fight the scheme, but to beat ID we really need to win the argument that the state cannot provide security or any bogus idea of respect, whether by ID cards, cameras or ASBOs. Society has been made rotten by the growing inequalities that are permitted by the system called capitalism

continued on page eight

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that allows a small minority of people to own most of the resources and organise our lives.

ID is a class issue – the rich will ensure their anonymity by their limited need for the welfare state. We must preserve ours by downright refusal to accept ID, not because it's too expensive and not because it won't work, but simply because we won't let the state invade every part of our lives. Out of struggle, as we have done before, we can strengthen our own idea of community that one day will overthrow the dominant systems of state and capitalism.

Common arguments against ID, and their limitations

For anarchists, opposition to ID cards might feel so obvious that it's beyond discussion, a 'no brainer'. But the number of dodgy anti-ID arguments coming out have only served to confuse matters.

"ID cards will cost loads, even more than a passport, and hurt those of us who can least afford it"

The ID database and card scheme will cost many billions of pounds. Much of this will end up lining the pockets of the private companies who will set up and run the computers and card-reading technology, and to pay the personnel involved in running the scheme. A figure of £300 per person has been determined by dividing the likely cost of the scheme by the population, and it it likely that a lot of this cost will be passed to individuals when we are asked to register for a card or make changes to our records - a kind of tax to pay for the fear and insecurity created by our scaremongering rulers. But it's important to remember the principle that we wouldn't want it even if it was free. Neither should the large fines scare us into registering. One of the strongest weapons against the Poll Tax was the campaign of mass non-registration by the public burning of forms or simply by ignoring council letters.

"ID card and database technology won't work"

There are huge technical problems with making ID work - no government has attempted a database scheme on the scale of the one proposed for ID in Britain. The story of public/private Information Technology projects has generally been one of massive delay and many additional years of expensive tinkering which have mostly benefitted only the companies that have the contracts. Home Office sponsored trials by Atos Origin showed unbelievably bad results for biometric registration and validation that would clearly discriminate against disabled, black and older people. A Dutch trial involving RFID passports showed that encrypted personal information could be read and the codes cracked in a very short time. These might seem like a good basis for opposing ID, but it's really not our problem. Let's not get drawn into arguing for a 'fair' or 'secure' system. We need to stand together and be clear we don't want any system, and try to use government incompetence to our advantage. Registration booths could become an important focus for direct action against the scheme, as could the companies involved.

"ID cards won't solve crime or terrorism"

The government has been sneaky to lump terrorism and organised crime in with any kind of credit card and welfare benefits fraud. But why should we care if a few of us are working the system when corporations and rich individuals continue to benefit from massive tax-avoidance and the government is spending millions on arms? A lot of us depend on 'petty' crime to overcome poverty in our class-divided society. Organised crime and the terror threat are mainly diversions to scare us into believing we need the state to be secure when it's state-imposed social inequality, warmongering and religious bigotry that are the problems. Many of the people who threaten us most through fear of poverty or violence, whether they are fraudsters, terrorists, bosses or generals, are rich people who can buy anonymity and freedom of movement. So the bleatings of Liberty and others in the 'It won't work' brigade end up just adding to the confusion, because the very act of going on about crime or terrorism just propagates fear of each other. This is another form of 'divide and rule', keeping us down when we should be fostering solidarity amongst ourselves to fight oppression together. Anarchists refuse to be drawn into worrying about a state initiative from the state's own perspective.

Page seven and above: anti-ID stickers produced by the Anarchist Federation. For copies, send donations to our national address.

"ID cards will lead us into a police state"

Well maybe, since the police will have access to the database and will have powers to demand to see ID cards, but even this sort of misses the point. The ID scheme is much more than information to help the police know who we are. If you're being denied healthcare or a driving license because you're not on the national register, is it not really enforcement that's the problem, it's the whole system. The real issue is the government's original idea of entitlement and its flipside - economic discrimination. The global capitalist economy relies on inequality so our governments are lying every time they say they don't want migrants working in Britain. They want cheap goods and labour from wherever they can get it and always have done, whether from the spoils of colonial rule, raw materials or sweatshop products feeding multinationals, from migration of workers with lower wage expectations, or by the driving down of wages in general.

Running this kind of capitalist system involves managing production and consumption for the mass of us. An electronic ID database will help to parcel up the majority of people in our 21st century society into economic units whose wages or welfare benefits, and the way these are spent, are tightly controlled. Plus, many workers are already being tagged and tracked in the workplace - a national ID could help extend this capability to all of us. All this is going on whilst the rich and higher-earning middle classes, especially those benefiting from the property boom or stock market income, can afford private healthcare and pensions along with the relative anonymity that goes with those privileges. That leaves those of us who depend on resources like state or low-paid occupational pensions and the NHS to have our entire life history put under detailed scrutiny from government bean-counters and private companies.

ID cards also take away our ability to create our own social and economic sphere. Labour (and some of the socialist Left who traditionally love social planning) hate the 'Grey Market' they can't track and tax, and so roll out the usual scare-stories of organised crime and terrorism. No surprise then that we are now seeing adverts telling us that buying cheap DVDs will buy guns for terrorists! They want us to feel guilty about everything from biodiesel, media piracy and cheap booze, while at the same time are promoting free-market policies for the rest of the world and helping companies make millions from the poverty of the majority of people on earth.

Ways to fight ID

Like the Tories' poll tax, ID cards are Labour's own version of a 'tax on being alive'. We can scupper ID cards as soon as they try and force us to register, but only if we start preparing now. Once the scheme is in place it will be harder, although certainly not impossible, to beat it. We cannot allow the state to get away with becoming more authoritarian than it already is.

Get involved

One way to fight the national identity scheme is to get involved with a local anti-ID group (or set one up) and help get the message out by producing and distributing information against ID in community & social centres, libraries, health centres and door-to-door. There is still a lot to do to explain the basic facts of the scheme, as well as its likely effects, and to work out effective forms of direct action.

Get informed

ID will affect different groups in society in many different ways. We know that applications to the Student Loans Company will be linked to ID, probably so they can keep tabs on any address changes, and university students may even need to have an ID card to get a loan. Charles Clarke also wants to gather ID information on other students and school leavers through the Connexions Card scheme for 13-19 years olds. There are likely be big changes in levels of police harassment for minority groups, and ID records could easily be used to control access to benefits or healthcare.

Get the inside information

Those in work can try and find out about any ID-related developments there. Anti-ID groups will be pleased to hear from any council workers or anyone else who can help the campaign find out when ID data collection starts to happen locally, especially in areas that may be chosen as a trial area for ID registration. A word of warning: local councils, who are likely to be involved with collecting additional personal data from the electoral role or council tax registers, are in general very authoritarian against anyone taking autonomous action. They also hate local people turning up in their cosy council houses to protest, especially when they would rather maintain the illusion that they are victims of a scheme instead of an integral part of it. Workers in companies implementing the scheme, like Experian, may know details about how their employer is planning to operate their part of it.

Get your passport

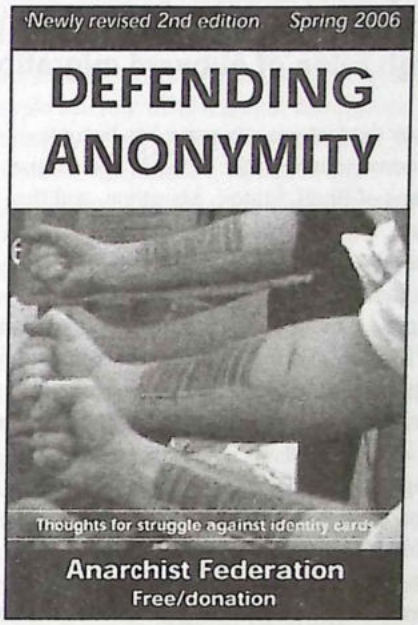
Personal information from passport applications will be used to build the National Identity Register from 2008-9 although you can 'opt out' of having an actual card until 2010. Some data collection has already started, taking face dimensions from passport photos. Later on, applicants will have to attend in person to get fingerprints or eyes scanned (69 Identity & Passport Service centres will be set-up around the country from October 2006 for in-person applications). So, for anyone who needs a new passport, it would be a good idea to get one now before the new systems are up and running properly, making sure the photo is not too clear so it is harder for the Passport Office to extract facial data. One Post Office service for the newer photo ID driving licence has your photo pre-checked so you can see what you can get away with (postage is also included which can work out cheaper than paying for this separately) - this may also be the case for passports. There must be lots of individual ways to confound the ID scheme and these can be shared in anti-ID groups, and even better, by telling friends and neighbours. This will help build a mass refusal campaign, because a scheme like this won't be prevented by small numbers of individuals helping themselves.

Get angry

Remember that local politicians of whatever colour cannot be trusted. Under the Tories, Labour council leaders enthusiastically issued poll tax demands and court orders, sent in the bailiffs and condemned local and national demonstrations as mindless riots. But as local people, we supported each other, we defied the courts and saw off bailiffs. We were angry and we fought back. Many of us disappeared off the registers for good. There may be a local MP against ID in some areas, but lobbying has been shown to be useless. We know that governments do not listen and that ID will be beaten on the streets or not at all.

Read the second edition of the AF's pamphlet Defending Anonymity-thoughts for struggle against identity cards, available on our website or for free (with SAE) from our usual address.

SECOND EDITION OUT NOW



Defending Anonymity

ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies are available FREE (donations welcome. Please send a stamped addressed envelope) from our national address. Also downloadable from www.afed.org.uk

rossport solidarity camp:

grassroots anti-capitalism in the west of ireland

Rossport is a very small village on Ireland's western Atlantic coast. It is a part of Erris, a sub-region of county Mayo, and is a very remote area characterised by small holdings on poor land, small scale fishing, low population, and, Celtic Tiger or not, high rates of outward migration.

Over the last year its name has become synonymous with the struggle against the plans of Shell, Statoil, Marathon, and the state, to construct a gas refinery and a raw gas pipeline of a kind hitherto never built on land. The development, a 9 km long pipeline and a 400 acre refinery site, plus an off-shore pipeline to the gas field itself, actually takes in a much larger area than just Rossport. It has been halted thus far by a variety of means including mass picketing, a protest camp on the pipeline route, and the planned blockade of a pipe-laying ship by fishing boats.

In this article I'll not be looking at the health and safety concerns, or environmental and economic issues concerning this development, or at the actions to date, but specifically at elements of the libertarian left's involvement, which is Rossport Solidarity Camp, participation in the national Shell to Sea campaign group, and the organisation of two gatherings in Erris. I'm going to attempt to draw out what lessons can be learned from this experience.

Community based environmental struggles

Perhaps the first lesson of the Rossport experience is that just because it is not on the activist radar screen doesn't mean it isn't happening. In February 2005 it would have been quite easy to have been unaware of what was happening in Erris, as it got next to no coverage in the mainstream media. This is in no respect different from many campaigns of a similar nature against unnecessary developments, both in an urban and rural context.

There is a long history of this in Ireland and elsewhere. For instance in the United States in the 80s the 'environmental justice movement', born of opposition to strip-mining, toxic waste dumps, and other assaults on communities and ecologies, consisted of between 2,000 and 5,000 autonomous local groups, mostly displaying a far more radical political agenda than mainstream environmental lobby groups or their deep ecology offspring (1). This due to both the racial and class bias of the location of hazardous industry making class and race an obvious part of the 'issue', and the class position of the resisting communities making for an interest in raising a wider agenda.

Likewise in mainland Europe, "Mass direct action by communities (occupations, sabotage, pitched battles with police) prevented nuclear power stations and reprocessing facilities being built at Plogoff in France, and at Wackersdorff in Germany in the 1980s." (2). This is not new to Ireland. For example, Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork, where a struggle against a proposed incinerator has been underway for the last few years became, in 1979, in the words of one local campaigner, "a police state" as the police battered their way through pickets to allow the construction of an asbestos dump (3). While it would be naïve to see radical potentials as being in all opposition to any development (which can sometimes emanate from the ranks of privileged, who will not bite the hand that feeds them), this would be a lesser evil than ignoring this arena of struggle altogether.

Rossport solidarity camp

The camp came out of the Solidarity Gathering which was held in Rossport in early June 2005.

It was possible because of networking in previous years, particularly around anti-war activism, and to a lesser extent around summit protests. An important hub of such networking in Ireland is the Grassroots Gatherings, get-togethers which happen 2 or 3 times a year, moving location and organising team each time, and embracing a wide spread of tendencies orientated towards bottom-up participatory forms of organising.

However, the camp soon demonstrated the limitations of the loose network as a form of organisation.

Building a camp is very much a resource heavy operation, it needs large tents, kitchen equipment, communication tools, some form of electricity supply – we have had the loan of a wind turbine. Most of this individuals do not own, or if they do, not in sufficient quantities. Indeed it is only relatively recently that we have acquired a van for our use. The acquisition and long term management of resources requires formal organisation. Apart from a lot of this stuff being expensive, how else would it be managed accountably and collectively, as opposed to being a source of personal power as it would be if it were someone's personal property?

The political make up of the camp is also instructive, with participation, in so far as it was coming from already existing political networks, more 'activist' than 'workerist'. Partly this reveals the limitation of the class struggle critique of activism, in that it ignores the absence of permanent communities and the absence of permanent workplaces, for much of what makes up the activist milieu. The model employed here, both in terms of the camp itself and solidarity actions elsewhere, allows a rootless scene to engage in a community based struggle.

The perception of the camp

The only mention of the Solidarity Gathering in the national press, was a 'positive' article in the Sunday Times, which read in part: "The landowners received training in protest tactics a month ago from the veteran demonstrators…Protesters, some of them veterans of other environmental protests at Carrickmines Castle and the Hill of Tara, briefed members of the local community on effective ways to halt construction and gain media exposure for their campaign."

In reality all of the workshops and talks at the Gathering, had, deliberately, been given by local residents, apart from one about Nigeria given by someone who used to live in the Delta. There was no 'training' and if there had been it would have been of little

use value given that the subsequent campaign of direct action over the summer, predominantly coming from residents, was above and beyond anything in the experience of anyone who had travelled to the Gathering, or participated in the camp. Moreover, rather than being 'veterans' of anything, much of the mainstay of the camp has been people hitherto uninvolved in campaigning.

It is not just a matter of superficial perceptions and portrayals. We live in a society of hierarchy and specialisation, which has as its ideological corollary the notion of social change being brought about by specialists ranging from clientist politicians to guerrilla armies, to charismatic leaders, to political parties, to eco-warriors. But direct action does not have to mean militancy. It means the maximum number of people taking self-determined practical steps to resist captalism's impositions. It follows that the role of the camp has been something along the lines of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in the Southern U.S. in the early 60s; that is, to support a community based struggle. Anything else was a practical impossibility anyways, because of limited numbers and resources. But the strength of the notion of professional activism is so great that it is always necessary to critique it. Professional activism only makes sense from a reformist single issue point of view, if you want to being doing something other than putting out fires, then how you achieve victory in a particular struggle is of as much importance as victory itself.

Activism

Much criticism of activism revolves around spectacular summit protests, which generate more heat than light (as opposed to 'more light than heat'). Hence I'm going to outline what I mean by activism aside from summit protests. The following is a generalisation, but it represents a distinct observable tendency. Firstly the determinant of what action is taken is moral outrage over a particular issue as opposed to a strategy aimed at contributing to a process of social change, which must by necessity involve massive numbers of folk. Following from this, priority is given to defending some wilderness or agitating around some issue in a far away place rather than an issue of generalised immediate concern. If the issue in question has popularity this is incidental. The main orientation is towards maximising militancy as opposed to maximising participation; that is, a radicalisation of technique rather than seeking to mobilise more people. The result of this often is a very inward looking perspective.

We need to orientate ourselves to where we can have mass participation, to where we can have a reasonable prospect of success, and to where possible, ongoing struggles with radical potentials. The set of principles adopted by the first Grassroots Gathering reads in part: "Organise for the control of the workplace by those who work there. Call for the control of communities by the people who live there".

This can only be realised through conscious mass participation. A political party (electoral or insurrectionary) or guerrilla sect can not produce this by its nature, and seeing social change as coming about solely through activists is the logic of the party or the army. Should the present order of things simply collapse, or be brought down by such an organisation, no alternative society would result, all the old shit would reassert itself – notions about the rationality of hierarchy, traditional gender relations, and so forth, as this would be peoples' understanding of normality, of the way things must be. Furthermore not only would we not have the idea that things could be different, we wouldn't have the confidence or organisational capacity to make them different. Hence any positive transformation of society requires conscious mass participation and it requires mass numbers

of people capable of making the change. So how do we get there? The necessary ideas, confidence and organisational capacity are developed in the here and now through struggle. As was outlined by Subversion: "the seeds of the future struggle for communism are contained within the working class's struggles of today. The types of working class resistance to the attacks of capitalism we support, like strikes, riots, organising against the Poll Tax, and so on, all interrupt the routine of capitalist 'normality'. In overcoming the practical problems which crop up in the course of these actions, those working class people actively involved find themselves having to develop their own collective solidarity, imagination, initiative and organisation. The development of these powers - all stifled by capitalism - is essential for the working class if it is to transform society".(4)

Winning a struggle contributes to people's belief in their capacity to make change. Moreover, we can see how in the course of a struggle radical ideas are developed, for instance the changing perception of the nature of the state experienced during the 84/85 Miners Strike, or the changing role of women produced in the same struggle.

At particular high points of popular struggle we can see organisational capacities develop to the point where bodies are developed – workplace and community councils - which have the potential to be embryos of a new society, for instance the sections of the Great French Revolution, the shoras of the uprisings in Iraq in 1991, and the barrio assemblies of contemporary Argentina.

Consequently we need to orientate our campaigning to where it has the greatest relevance to people's day to day lives to produce the optimum amount of mass participation from the point of view of contributing to the potential for social change. It follows from the above argument – which essentially is about empowerment – that in such contexts we must favour direct action rather than representative politics, that is that our goal must be to support and encourage people to sort it out for themselves, as opposed to looking to politicians, lawyers, or professional activists.

Because of the sparse population in Erris, and the major nature of the development, the camp is an appropriate action, but it does not follow that in every campaign such a tactic is useful. It also follows that how the camp is promoted is of great impor-

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continued from page eleven

tance, e.g. on activist e-mail lists, or with mass leafleting. That is to say, who are we trying to attract? The relative inaccessibility of this form of action, together with the associated media 'eco-warrior' spectacularisation, intensifies these issues.

The camp and anarchism

The camp has been a working model of anarchism in action, in that it involves a group not only organising campaigning as a collective of equals, but organising day to day living and activity in such a way.
As it is a living space this necessitates dealing with issues such as sexual violence. This is not something which has happened on the camp, but we felt we would give it attention to inhibit the possibility or, failing that, so as to address it rather than ignore it. The camp has been predominantly male, but is very much not male dominated, or so I'm told. It is also organised in an ecological manner, with recycling, and energy from wind power. A criticism of the camp could be that it hasn't put forward an explicitly anarchist case against Shell's development. However, while being organised in a libertarian form, the camp is an open, broad-based campaigning tactic, not an anarchist organisation. Nonetheless, there is a need for its formal organisation, not only to manage resources but to build links between struggles, and also to make explicit the role of capital and the state in unnecessary developments like the one at Rossport and the need to undermine both of them.

(1) Szasz, Andrew, 'Ecopopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice', University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994, page 158.
(2) Anarchist Federation, 'Ecology and Class: Where there's Brass there's Muck', 2004, page 34.
(3) Allen, Robert, and Jones, Tara, 'Guests of the Nation: The people of Ireland versus the Multinationals', Earthscan Publications, 1990, page 109.
(4) The Best of Subversion, www.geocities.com/knightrose.geo/bestof10.html
For more information see:
www.indymedia.ie/mayo
www.struggle.ws/rsc/
www.shelltosea.com
Rossport Solidarity Camp welcomes more volunteers. People can come and stay for as long or as short as they like. The camp can be contacted at:
rossportsolidaritycamp@gmail.com or 00353 9720944.

a new world in

"We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeois may blast and ruin it's own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here in our hearts. That world is growing this minute." (Buenaventura Durruti, anarchist militant, 1937)

2006 sees the70th anniversary of one of the most important episodes of European working class history – the Spanish Revolution.
Because the Spanish anarchist movement was historically such a large and important one, anarchists have had a reputation for idealising the Spanish events of 1936 – 1937 and the role of libertarians in it. Unlike, for example, Britain or Ireland, anarchist ideas had been at the forefront of socialist politics in Spain since the 1860s. The libertarian movement had deep roots amongst both the peasantry and the emergent industrial working class for more than half a century prior to the 1936 revolution.

CNT-FAI

Most of that movement could be found in the revolutionary syndicalist National Labour Confederation (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo - CNT), a union which in May 1936 numbered over half a million. By no means all CNT members were anarchists, many had joined for the simple reason that the union was the strongest and most effective in their workplace. But the organisation was at least nominally committed to a libertarian communist future and was regarded as a *de facto* anarchist union. Partly in order to maintain the CNT's libertarian and revolutionary perspectives, anarchist militants had in 1927 created the Iberian Anarchist Federation (Federación Anarquista Iberica - FAI). This latter organisation had a structure based upon affinity groups and in 1936 claimed something in the region of 30,000 militants.
It is easy to see how the libertarian movement was a major player in Spanish political life, vastly outnumbering the Communist Party and challenging the social democratic party, the Workers' Socialist Party and their industrial wing, the General Workers Union (Unión General de Trabajadores- UGT), for the allegiance of the urban and rural working class. It was, therefore, inevitable that the anarchists would play a major role in the social upheaval sparked by an attempted military – clerical – fascist coup in July 1936.

July 1936

The July revolt by a large section of the Spanish army, led by General Franco and supported by the Catholic Church and the fascist Falange party, might be described as a pre-emptive counter-revolution. A 'Popular Front' government had been elected in February, bringing to power a coalition dominated by the Left Republicans, a middle class democratic party with a programme of modernisation and moderate reform. Despite their involvement in this front, the Socialists would not take part. Even so, this was enough to prompt the reactionary forces of the traditional ruling elite to immediately prepare for civil war. On July 17th what became known as the *Nationalist* revolt kicked off in Spanish Morocco, quickly spreading into Spain itself. As town after town fell to the militarists the Republican government vacillated, talked of coming to an agreement with the rebel military and generally appeared paralysed in the face of the revolt. As the initiative for resisting the Nationalists was falling to the workers' organisations, particularly the CNT and UGT, the government slowly authorised the arming of the union militias. In the capital, Madrid, the revolt was rapidly disarmed by armed UGT militants alongside those security forces who remained 'loyal' to the government. In Barcelona the CNT took effective control. Though large parts of Spain were in the hands of the Nationalists, their overall advance was temporarily halted and the large cities of Barcelona and Madrid were in the hands of the unions. In Barcelona the CNT and FAI emptied the barracks and

our hearts

distributed arms to groups of members across Catalonia and beyond. So, in the midst of civil war and chaos, began the Spanish Revolution.

In Catalonia and Aragon, the two regions with the greatest concentration of libertarian workers and peasants, there began a social transformation. Real power was being taken into the hands of the working class as the government looked on, temporarily powerless. The distribution of food, the maintenance of public services, the opening of collective restaurants and the organisation of defence against the Nationalist forces were all being undertaken by strictly unofficial elements! Human creativity was being unleashed and the state was nowhere to be seen, though undoubtedly it was there, waiting to regain strength.

Collectivisations of industry and the expropriation of the land, initiated by CNT and, to a lesser extent, UGT members, were taking place throughout these areas. Often, anarchist militias such as the famous Durruti Column, would actively promote and defend collectivisations as they travelled to the frontline. The collectivisation of land has been described as "Probably the most creative legacy of Spanish anarchism" by the writer and historian Daniel Guerin. As large landowners abandoned their estates their workers took over and ran them collectively. Where landowners stayed, those who had appeared sympathetic to the militarist revolt were kicked off the land whilst 'good republican' landowners were often invited to join the collectives! In total it is estimated that possibly 3 million people were involved in collectives in the 'revolutionary period 'of 1936-37.

The collectives variously attempted to put into practice libertarian communism based on the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' but, more commonly, collectivism where a 'family wage' was paid by the collective.

The social revolution

Socially, the revolution began to cast-off centuries of mental servitude to the ruling class and the Catholic church. Working people began to discard formal and deferential speech, common in Spanish. People spoke to each other as equals. Churches found themselves under attack, often being requisitioned for practical use and sometimes simply burnt down as symbols of centuries-old oppression. New groups involving themselves in artistic, musical and cultural activities emerged in a surge of creativity unleashed by the possibilities the revolution offered.

The industrial collectivisations

In the industrial areas of 'Loyalist Spain', particularly Catalonia, large parts of manufacturing and most public services were immediately taken over and managed by the workers. The collectivised factories and workshops were, for four months after the July events, run without state involvement. The revolution in Russia in 1917 had faced the problem of the desertion of skilled technicians to the counter-revolution, and although this was not as widespread in Spain, where many technical staff were themselves active syndicalists, it was still a factor. Unlike the agricultural experiments in self-management, the industrial efforts were faced with having to reorganise the factories to produce armaments and military vehicles. Added to this was the successful attempt by the state to co-opt the collectivisations.

In October the Catalan regional government ratified the socialisation of industry. The state was attempting to both control the collectivisation process and to use it to its own advantage in building the war effort and disciplining the workforce. The state decreed that all factories employing more than 100 workers were to be brought under the joint management of a Council of Enterprises. This Council was to include both the workforce and a representative from the Catalan regional government who would act as 'controller'. The Collectivisation Decree of October 1936, however, transferred all real power to the state's General Council for Industry. Although the workers who had taken control *through direct action* in 1936 remained nominally in control, their role was in reality only to be consulted and, naturally, *to work*.

How did this happen? In July 1936 the state was impotent and almost invisible, yet a few months later it had returned and had usurped power from the working class.

The CNT-FAI betrayal

The reason can be found in the fact that whilst the rank and file of the libertarian organisations were engaging in collectivisations and land seizures, the 'leadership' of the movement saved the government from complete eclipse.

And it began this process as early as the 20th July, the day following the halting of the militarist rising. On that fateful day Luis Companys the President of the Generalitat, the regional government of Catalonia, summoned representatives of the CNT and the FAI. Companys offered to resign from a government which existed in name only, its ability to 'restore order' non-existent. At this meeting the CNT and FAI, representing the armed and mobilised masses, decided that a new administration could be established between the revolutionary workers movement and the leftist forces of the Popular Front. The new structure was the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias and it was this

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organisation which oversaw the social re-organisation in the weeks following the effective collapse. It was this committee which helped co-ordinate the establishing and supplying of militias to fight at the front, the collectivisations and the maintenance of social services. But the vital breathing space gave the government the opportunity to recover and re-establish its power. As the dissident anarcho-syndicalist group 'Friends of Durruti' were to reflect later: "There can be absolutely no common ground between exploiters and exploited. Which shall prevail, only battle can decide. Bourgeoisie or workers. Certainly not both of them at once." (Towards a Fresh Revolution, 1938)

So, with power in the hands of the working class, why did the leadership of the CNT-FAI not simply dismiss the government and maintain workers power? The betrayal cannot be blamed upon reformist or moderate elements in the CNT, after all, the militant FAI was also there. Indeed, the FAI's Garcia Oliver, present at the meeting, stated that the choice was between: "Libertarian Communism, which means the anarchist dictatorship, or democracy, which means collaboration." (quoted in Lessons of the Spanish Revolution, Vernon Richards 1953).

This false dichotomy ignored the possibility of maintaining and extending the gains of the working class without an 'anarchist dictatorship' but through the suppression of the republican democratic bourgeoisie, which was already in disarray.

The 'anarchist' politicians

The choice of collaboration sealed the fate of the revolution. Dual power could not last very long. On September 27th representatives of the CNT entered the new Council of the Generalitat, the reorganised regional government of Catalonia and the Central Committee of the Anti-Fascist Militias, in which the CNT had placed so much hope, was gone. The decision to enter the government appears to have been taken a week earlier by the National Committee of the CNT, which was supposed to be answerable to the union as a whole. The CNT had called for a Regional Defence Council which would co-ordinate without being a government per se, but when offered places in a coalition with bourgeois parties they did not hesitate to cross the class divide. The 'hard-line' FAI militant Garcia Oliver was to say "The Committees of the Anti-Fascist Militias have been dissolved because now the Generalitat represents all of us." This amazing statement shows how quickly both anarchist principles and class analysis were thrown away. The stage was set for the 'anarchist' politicians to enter the National Government of Spain, led by left socialist Largo Caballero, two months later in November 1936.

The rise of the Communist Party

The growth of the Communist Party throughout what became the Spanish Civil War was phenomenal. Two main factors promoted that growth. Firstly, the Spanish Republic looked to the Soviet Union for material aid and support and secondly, the Spanish Stalinists opposed any revolutionary activity which might jeopardise the bourgeois republic and thereby recruited heavily from all those who might be inconvenienced by collectivisations. The Communist Party, adept at infiltration and manipulation, took control of the Socialist Party's youth section and, through the importation of Russian military advisors and their own political commissars, rapidly gained an influence in the military of the Republic out of all proportion to their size. In 1936 the party united with the Catalan socialists to form the Catalan United Socialist Party (PSUC), which it dominated.

The Communist Party was the main sponsor of the famous International Brigades, the tens of thousands of volunteers who came from across the globe to 'defend the republic'. This added to the Party's kudos.

Militarisation

The communists were also at the forefront

of the campaign to integrate the militias of the CNT-FAI and the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), a large anti-Stalinist left socialist grouping, into the 'Popular Army' of the Republic.
Opposition to militarization of the militias came mainly from the grassroots of the CNT-FAI and, naturally, from the anarchist militias which had emerged in July – September 1936 during the existence of the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias. The militias were not opposed to co-ordination of the physical fight against the nationalist military, but of being forced into a traditional army which would be controlled by whoever was in charge of the state.
However, the military situation in the period following the entry of the 'anarchists' into the regional and central governments was dire for the Republican forces. The government left Madrid for Valencia as the capital was besieged in November and the pressure increased for the dissolving of the militias into a regular army. The increasing militarization of the Republican area was another sign that the revolution was being strangled and that the working class was becoming used in a conventional war between two rival factions of the ruling class.

The May events, 1937

The last gasp of the Spanish revolution came in May 1937. Throughout April the Generalitat, complete with 4 'anarchist' ministers, including the Minister for Justice, had been escalating harassment of 'uncontrollable elements' in the CNT and the POUM, disarming workers patrol groups, raiding offices. On the morning of May 3rd a provocation occurred that would signal the final defeat of the Revolution and the capitulation of the CNT to the state. The Barcelona Telephone Exchange had been under the control of its workers, mainly CNT members, since the July days. At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Monday May 3rd the police attempted to occupy the building but could not advance beyond the first floor due to resistance from the workers. News of the assault spread and rank and file CNT, FAI and POUM militants responded, arming themselves and organising to resist. The leadership of the CNT called for calm and the removal of the police from the building. But events were overtaking the leaders and a general strike developed in Barcelona as barricades were erected by the working class across the city. Shooting started in the early hours of the next day and continued sporadically. Still the CNT called for negotiations to end the stand-off. Exactly 24 hours after the occupation of the telephone exchange the CNT-FAI called for the workers organisations to unilaterally lay down their arms in a radio broadcast. "Workers of the CNT! Workers of the UGT! Don't be deceived by these manoeuvres. Above all else, Unity! Put down your arms. Only one slogan: We must work to beat fascism! Down with fascism!"
But the counter-revolution, spearheaded by the PSUC and the local Catalan Nationalists, was determined to humble the anarchists. Libertarians were shot in cold blood only yards from the headquarters of the CNT. On the 5th the state escalated the provocation by an assault on the local Libertarian Youth centre and the surrounding of CNT headquarters. On the same night the Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri and his comrade Barbieri were abducted and murdered by a joint police and PSUC squad. Berneri, editor of 'Guerra di Classe" (Class War) was one of the most intelligent and constructive critics of the anarchist collaboration.

Again capitulation

At this time The Friends of Durruti group issued a proclamation calling for a 'Revolutionary Junta' (Council) to be established, which would include the POUM. The POUM, however, remained indecisive and awaited the leadership of the CNT-FAI. The leadership could only counsel 'serenity' and calm, calling for a return to work and a ceasefire whilst the Catalan government called in reinforcements from around Republican Spain!
Despite the encouragement not to abandon the streets which came from the Friends of Durruti, the rank and file of the CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth complied with the leadership. The majority of syndicalists and anarchists continued to trust those who had been their most ardent militants in the years before. By Friday 7th, the fighting in Barcelona had ended. The Catalan and national governments, however, took this as a sign that the CNT would now accept almost anything in the name of anti-fascist unity and despite agreements to the contrary, occupied the entirety of the telephone exchange and continued to harass, intimidate and arrest anarchists.

Aftermath

The aftermath of the May Days saw the power and confidence of the state reinforced and the morale of the revolutionaries sapped. In June the state outlawed the POUM, which subsequently disappeared from the scene, mainly into Stalinist prisons. In July the anarchists were excluded from the reorganised Catalan government and from August onwards the state carried on a programme of de-collectivisation. The revolution, in the sense of working class power and of a libertarian reorganisation of society, was dead. The revolution dead, the defeat of the Republic followed as the nationalists, supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, crushed the 'Peoples Army'.

An impossible revolution?

The Spanish Revolution of 1936 was born in the midst of a period of darkest reaction. Italy and Germany were under the jackboot of fascism, their working class subdued by repression. The Soviet Union, at the height of Stalin's dictatorship *over* the proletariat, dominated the left through the Communist International. Stalinism internationally served to defend the Soviet Union and the policy of the Communist Parties twisted and turned depending on the needs of the 'Workers' Fatherland'. It is no exaggeration to say that the working class was in a position of international defeat. When the workers of Spain spontaneously moved to crush the nationalist – militarist uprising they were alone, isolated and far from being part of an international movement. What they had in their favour were mass organisations, built over many years and having come through repression and illegality.
From the very beginning the anarchist and syndicalist movement's 'official' leadership acted like politicians and played the political games of the bourgeoisie. Paralysed by the fear of establishing an 'anarchist dictatorship' they instead effectively accepted the dictatorship of the democratic, anti-fascist ruling class. And whilst the rank and file of the anarchist movement strove to proceed towards libertarian communism, they failed to challenge their own organisation's integration into the historical enemy of classical anarchism – the state. The Friends of Durruti put it clearly when they said that "Democracy, not fascism, defeated the Spanish people".
An incredible creativity and capacity for creating a new world was exhibited, in the worst possible conditions, by millions of Spanish workers and peasants. This, tragically, was not enough to actually make the new world, held deeply in their hearts, realised.

Perhaps after the high profile given to anarchists in anti-capitalist actions against the G8 last year we should be grabbing those 15 minutes of fame while we have the chance. Or is our distrust of the media and academia well-founded? This article is presented for debate since not every AF member is in agreement with all of the views expressed here. To date, AF members have limited ourselves to writing letters to local newspapers, talking to programme makers and doing the odd radio interview, all in an individual capacity, but we have discussed whether to do more.

A different kind of media interest

From the "Face of Hate" tabloid headlines about Class War in the 1980's to the hysterical "Anarchist 'gallows' to disrupt G8" in the Sunday Times last May referring to their 'discovery' of an anarchist plot to hang ourselves off bridges, we are used to reading alarmist, ill-informed or blatantly fabricated articles in the daily newspapers, whether these are directed at specific organisations or at "anarchy" in general. But since the Gleneagles G8 summit and in the few months preceding it, the AF has been inundated with a different kind of press request that is more open and seemingly more respectful of our viewpoint. First we were asked to participate in what became a BBC4 documentary "G8 - Can You Hear Us?", a story made up from following various groups at (and on their journey to) the summit. Then Channel 4 News contacted us to ask if we'd "got any events or actions planned" for the summit. In recent months we've even been invited on to that scary BBC1 religious Sunday TV programme "The Heaven and Earth Show" to debate the Christian work ethic, and ITV youth series "It's My Life" asking us to argue 'wealth can't buy happiness' against Peter Stringfellow! Then BBC TV Newcastle emailed to find someone who had received "but did not pay" a fixed penalty notice, to form part of a debate about their use by local councils to punish graffiti and littering, and apparently to give it a civil liberties flavour. Even our views on football seem to be of interest, at least to one Guardian sports journalist, judging by a quote from one of our Resistance bulletins about FC United. We're just waiting for that call to ask us for our racing tips.

A related issue is a heightened interest in anarchism from the academic direction. As well as contact from the mainstream media, the AF has had numerous requests from students of media studies or critical theory who want to get our views about direct action and misrepresentation of anarchism in the media for their essays or projects. We've also had an interview request from a student newspaper for their "In Ideas" section (does that mean we're really cool?). All of these approaches offered an opportunity to overcome misconceptions. This is presumably in response to 'intellectual' articles written by journalists and academics in magazines like the Economist "For jihadist, read anarchist" and on various websites like Aljazeera's "Al-Qaida: The wrong answers", who think it's clever to liken anarchist theory and tactics to those of Islamic terrorists. Our Aims and Principles have also been quoted, and misrepresented, in an academic paper in the journal "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism" called "Anarchist direct actions - a challenge for law enforcement".

Should we be taking this heightened interest seriously and attempt to engage better either as an opportunity to promote anarchism or to defend our views when misrepresented? Should we be talking as often as possible to journalists and academics, or perhaps go even further and try and get on Big Brother? I will argue that there are good practical and theoretical reasons for shunning both the press and approaches by academics.

The media monolith

The problem with media made and presented by professionals, however sympathetic a particular writer or programme maker may seem, is that it's not going to promote the necessity of destroying the State and capitalism, far from it. From Murdoch's TV and newspaper empire (Sky, Times, Sun etc.) and the BBC, to various smaller news outfits like the Guardian Media Group, together with a heavy reliance on global news agencies like Reuters and Associated Press, our mainstream media is very much a corporate

how do anarchists gain influence?

media, academia and class struggle

Anarchists, in Britain at least, have traditionally been hostile to using the mainstream media and academic press to spread our ideas. But are we missing out on the chance to reach a wider audience?

monolith in the hands of a small number of powerful 'barons' who are interested in both money and power, the kind of power that claims to control the fate of governments (unless like Berlusconi's Italy you also run the government!).

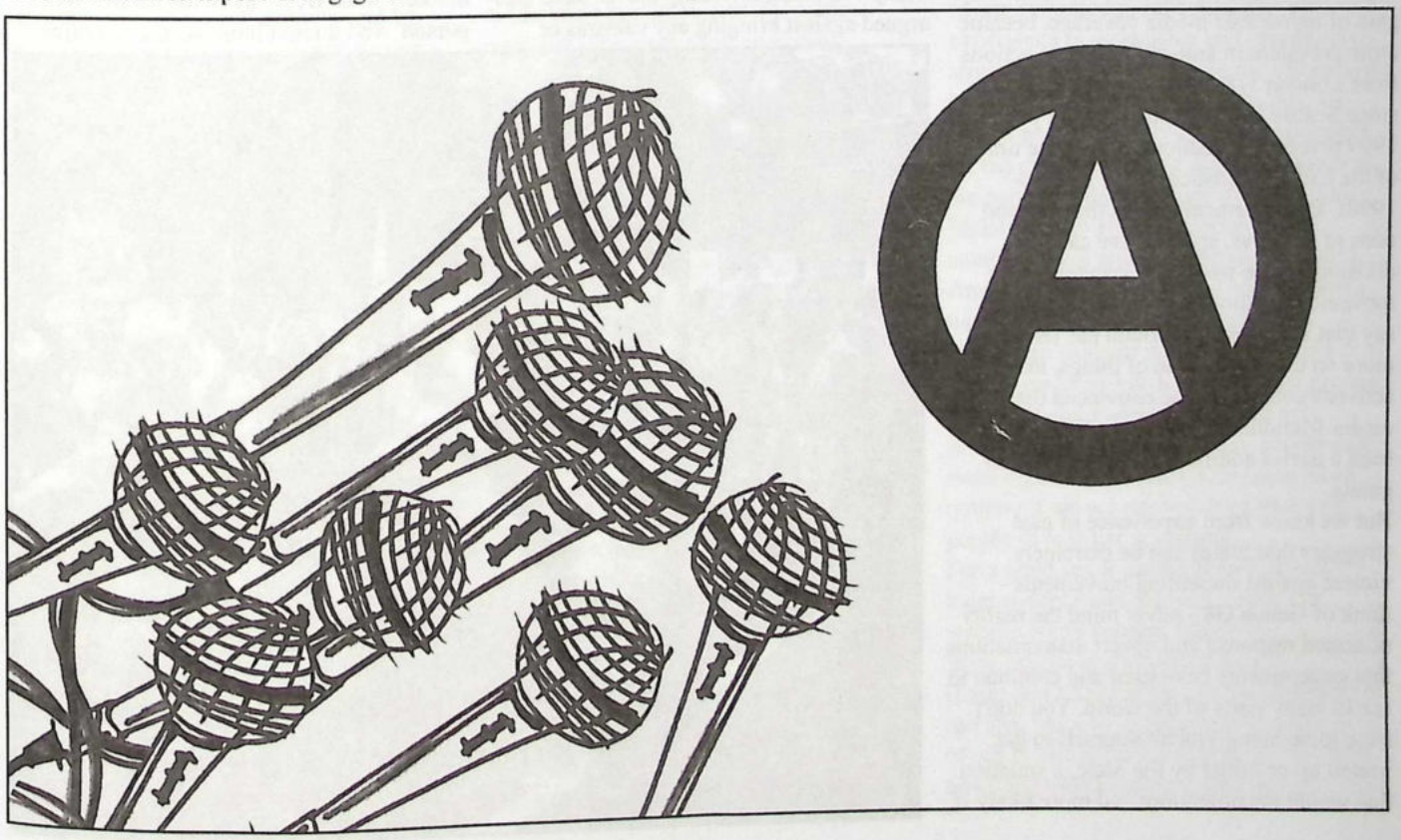
Media's other reasons for being are a greater or lesser mixture of State control and 'public service' which effectively means either presenting us with blatant propaganda or force-feeding us with a diet of opinions on what makes a good citizen. These roles of the mainstream media are good for propping up the status quo, and very bad at taking seriously any attempt to destroy it, even if some of them come out against the government from time to time, or may themselves become victims of censorship (or even get bombed during a war). The media will always act to defend democracy however they define it, cannot go very far to expose its limitations and failings, and in fact creates a facade over what is really a ruthlessly anti-democratic underbelly.

Whilst the sacred cow of investigative journalism may claim to have occasionally helped changed 'public' views on Vietnam and various other nasty wars and atrocities, physical change did not come about without sustained struggle domestically and, in the case of the Vietnam war, by insubordination, desertion or mutiny of soldiers. Furthermore, investigative programmes, rather than confront the powers that be, more often aim to expose or engage in character assassination of groups or individuals not liked by the mainstream whether it's Fathers for Justice, members of the British National Party, 'radical' Imams, Michael Jackson, or animal rights groups engaged in economic sabotage against vivisectors.

Many more television hours are filled with programmes about civil servants catching benefit 'cheats' or the outing of dodgy workmen or petty criminals. It does not really matter whether we would support or oppose certain groups or individuals (or not care either way), the democratic approach will always be one of appeal to the legal process of the State, never to encourage self-activity. It's more than a bit ripe to hear them go on about defending free speech when the same media cannot countenance direct action by anarchists, anti-fascists or any working class person against those who seek to deny the freedom of others.

Plus we know that investigations of big business corruption, governments 'misleading the public', or military 'misdemeanours' rarely change anything just on the basis of exposure, because there are wealthy and powerful interests at play. The real nature of our ruling class is rarely revealed, or if it is, only years after an event and presented by the media as a shock surprise. A recently documented example of selective media is press indifference to overt British and US support for the bloodbath meted out in Indonesia by the Sukarno regime in the 1960s and the subsequent invasion of East Timor, that was vigorously campaigned against by activists at the time, but is now presented only as a hard-to-find footnote of unsavoury history rather than an atrocity that was perpetrated and covered up by politicians that are still in power today (see Mark Curtis' book "Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World"). Media reporting of conflicts in the Balkans is another good example. Today this carries on with the reporting of events in Iraq, which ever more quickly become historical news items rather than current affairs, and are in turn justified by a patriotic fervour continually fed to us by the press to create support for whatever military action is going on in the here and now.

Most seriously for activists, the mainstream media, if they bother to mention us at all, will deliberately misrepresent the revolutionary movement and try to identify and discredit the "extremist elements" - that's us! The risk of misrepresentation is extremely high, whether by misunderstanding or deliberate manipulation by editors and producers, or by a journalist with a political agenda (as was experienced recently by Noam Chomsky when he was smeared through a Guardian interview as the denier of a massacre during the Bosnian war, by means of creative editing). It can also be very difficult to come across well in a live situation especially if you are confronted with 'hostile interviewer' techniques. Never mind that journalists are being paid to help a media business and its shareholders sell



papers or advertising space, and that they have an interest in furthering their media careers. They are really not likely to be sympathetic of our aims, so we should not be flattered by their apparent interest in our principles.

Consumption of TV and newspapers alienates us in such a way that the events we see and read about become detached from real life. The more extreme a group is, compared to the cultural norm that the broadcaster or newspaper editor is appealing to, the more it will come across like an act in a freak-show (although played to advantage by the Clown Army in "G8 – Can You Hear Us"). For example, producers of "The Heaven and Earth Show", mentioned above, made it clear to us that they wanted someone who had dropped out of the 'rat-race' because of their politics - a preconception if there ever was one and a clear message that the narrative of the show had been decided in advance. As soon as anarchists become the subject of debate rather than being seen as active participants in a struggle, we become an easy target for those who may wish to caricature us as naïve fools or violent thugs, rather than rational opponents of a oppressive and violent social system.

Fluffy vs Spikey

Unfortunately, not everyone in the anti-capitalist movement agrees with this analysis. Fluffiness, a non-violent approach to protest, which has as one of its tactics the gain of favourable media coverage, became quite prevalent in anti-globalisation actions from London J18 onwards and especially since Seattle N30. These both took place in 1999 preceded by actions around the time of the Criminal Justice Act in the mid-1990s. Disagreements about the pros and cons of fluffy vs. spikey have caused divisions in the wider anti-capitalist movement. Although it's probably true to say that anarchism in Britain has remained more on the spikey side of things, many activists continue to be convinced that media-friendliness is the way to go, or at least a useful addition to our own propaganda.

But we know from experience of past struggles that States can be extremely violent against dissenting movements - think of Genoa G8 - never mind the reality of armed response and covert assassinations that governments have used and continue to use in many parts of the world. You don't have to be being violent yourself to get beaten up or killed by the State, a situation that would become more and more likely if mass uprisings or revolution started to look likely.

Once you believe that violence is an inevitable part of the class struggle, knowing that the worst violence is perpetrated by nation states and corporations, there is just no point trying to use the mainstream press to justify your position. The experience of Class War speaking on TV (BBC Newsnight if I remember rightly) after the 1990 Trafalgar Square anti-Poll Tax riot is instructive. After calling the rioters "working class heroes" the spokesperson was immediately victimised by bosses at his local council workplace (although happily defended by his workmates).

We should also be careful not to give away tactical info of any kind. Confusion amongst the ruling class of our strength and aims can be a great advantage for a small movement. Talking to the media before, on, or after actions is always risky in this respect bearing in mind that some journalists may have links to the cops, or could even be cops. Especially beforehand, it's important not to hand the media/police on a plate what we may or may not be doing, or even to let them know we are supporting or attending an action. Even by saying you are just speaking as a individual can still impart information about your group's approach to an event. It's perhaps better if they think none of us are involved and make it hard for them to plan their response!

Many anarchists including the AF have also argued against bringing any cameras or recording devices on demos even by do-it-yourself (DIY) media outfits, because of the high risk of them getting into police hands or confusing them with undercover police equipment. Bravado remarks like 'the Special Branch know about us already so why should we worry' are not well-founded. If that was the case, why would police have used a court order to view and then seize TV footage of last summer's anti-G8 actions from BBC Scotland (15 tapes) and Scottish Television (10 tapes) and obtained a warrant to take tapes from Sky?

Academia

Study of the history of anarchist thought and practice has been important for our movement and there are academics of anarchism who are good comrades. Furthermore, anarchism modules in university degrees seem to be more popular than ever. But does this mean we should be engaging more with the academic community to get anarchism talked about even more widely? Would it be useful to have our aims, strategies and tactics discussed in academic journals and specialist conferences, and perhaps infect the Zeitgeist with positive features of anarchism? The answer must be found in the audience of such journals. Not all academics who are interested in anarchism will be committed activists and working within our movement to make knowledge available to the masses. The academic publications themselves are unlikely to be freely available to the 'lay-person' who doesn't have access to online

subscriptions to journals. Even when printed versions of academic journals are available, access is being made worse by restrictions of free entry to university libraries.

Moreover, many academic studies are intended to gain and disseminate understanding in order to control dissent. Just look at papers devoted to protest, especially of violent ones like riots. Some of these might be by those who claim to be well-meaning social scientists devoted to understanding the motivations of protesters, and may even paint protesters in a positive light. But these and many much less sympathetic academic studies feed directly into State policy, for example, informing crowd control strategies of the police who both read and contribute to such journals. This specialist knowledge is intended for an elite, does very little to contribute to the struggle against the system, and more often than not will act against our interests and security.

Lastly, many anarchist writers and translators, often self-taught, have contributed to our extensive body of knowledge that is available in libraries and freely available on the internet. Others have created more accessible and cheaper versions of longer texts, or contribute their knowledge to open meetings. This all helps to take anarchism out of the academies so we have less need for them than we might have otherwise.

Media by us, for us.

Anarchism is about self-activity and so, when we do use media, it should be our own. DIY media is part of a process of active participation in struggles. It involves people acting not as subjects but as those making change, learning to demystify the process of presenting news and ideas, and very importantly choosing if and when it is useful to speak. For sure, the internet has transformed communication in our movement, but again it's about self-presentation. We could spend all day contributing to high-profile online forums like those on the BBC News website and achieve very little, when many of the same ideas can be found on our own websites or other publications. So anarchist communist organisation is about being involved with and learning through class struggle. Revolutionary commitment isn't going to be got across through media spectacle, but by meaningful human interactions. To try to get 15 minutes of fame (or infamy) in our celebrity-worshipping culture - perhaps 15 or more years with the help of a massive marketing machine if you are rich and lucky - involves impressing either an elite, or least a sizable number of passive consumers. Even the new approach of 'viral marketing' that involves active participation in social networks is only interested in targeting an elite group of persuaders to sell a product or idea on its 'coolness'. These approaches are bound to fail to achieve the spread of revolutionary ideas. Furthermore, complex ideas are best debated when they have real meaning, not in the isolation of an academic discipline. The ideas of Bakunin for example, had most meaning in the late 1800s when the possibility of immediate social revolution was real. Today they serve as a historical lesson of what happens when other ideas like the Workers' State are forced on the masses, and can now be used to warn against trusting the authoritarian left in contemporary struggles.

It's also a matter of safety. A personal experience in a local anti-poll tax group is relevant to this. At being denounced as a violent anarchist after the Trafalgar Square demonstration by the local Militant (now Socialist Party) hack, whose party had publicly condemned the riot and whose leaders had promised to "name names" to the police, other non-aligned members of our local anti-poll group defended me knowing that I was a solid member of our group involved in all levels of campaigning. Never mind the fact that anarchists had, in reality, nothing to do with 'organising' a riot as was being portrayed in the media (a view that was unhelpfully backed up by Class War's appearance on TV in my opinion). The myth of an anarchist-organised riot was dismantled by people's first hand participation in the demonstration, and such was the strength of solidarity in local groups that a local defence fund organisation formed in my town in addition to the national one. This supported and raised money for all those facing court cases after the riot, with the principle that there was to be no judgment as to what they had been arrested for. This degree of support came out of direct experience of a mass-participation riot in the context of a sustained community campaign, something that would never have come out of a press appeal. It's also worth stressing how far away this is from the tactics used by terrorists, who go out of their way to advertise themselves using the mainstream press in order to heighten the fear they want to create.

"The revolution will not be televised"

Anarchist communists do not wish to be seen as a group of experts in insurrectionary principles. An organisation of less than 100 members is not going to change the world on its own and we have no pretensions of leading a revolution, unlike the authoritarian left. Even if we succeeded in getting across so well on TV that 1000 potential new members contacted us the next day just because they liked our ideas, if they had no experience of revolt in their workplaces or communities, an organisation like ours would surely collapse! For the same reasons we don't spend every week on a stall in town, trying to flog our papers or recruit new members. Anarchism will only gain influence if it shows itself to be effective through application of theory in practice (praxis) by people in the course of struggle. If through this process a person finds they want to know more about anarchism or join the AF we would consider that a bonus.

Mainstream media is either about caricaturing us to a passive audience, or explaining us to an elite, and we should not help them. Why would we even want to be considered respectable in their eyes? It's all to the better if they get it wrong or have to make it up so we can laugh at them rather than get annoyed about being misrepresented! To demystify and ridicule the mainstream media is to weaken it, towards the day when it will be swept away with the rest of the State and capitalism. At that time the grip of the State on the media will tighten, as it does during a war. Anarchists should therefore continue to prioritise production of our own media, reflecting on real experience in workplace and community struggles, rather than waste our efforts with broadcast and press. Further to this, we should preferably rely as little as possible on big events to spread our ideas, as these are here one day and gone the next (like Make Poverty History whose media campaign was ended at the end of 2005). And rather than getting too bogged down with academia we would very much encourage students who are interested in anarchism to join or form anarchist groups, to publish their own papers, and get involved with struggles where people can work together as equals. Our ideas mean nothing if we are not involved with real people in real-life situations.

For a good set of online anarchist and independent news sources, check our website News section: http://www.libcom.org/hosted/af/news/

If you don't have access to the internet, you can also write to us for printed copies of all of our publications including our monthly news and views bulletin, Resistance.

the struggle against mountain top removal in appalachia

Interview by an AF member in Ireland. I came across Mountain Justice Summer while browsing, and was interested in the parallels with Rossport Solidarity Camp. Both appear to be premised on the idea of attracting youth radicalised through anti-globalisation and anti-war activism into travelling to an area to support a struggle based around a local community's opposition to environmental devastation. I was interested in learning from the difficulties faced by, and potentials of, this campaign. Mountain Justice Summer is based in Appalachia, historically a place that has seen intense class struggle, quite different from Mayo, and I was interested in how that influenced the current situation. I interviewed Joe, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), aka Wobblies, who is involved in Mountain Justice Summer, for the perspective of someone from one of the more workplace orientated parts of the libertarian left, as those parts, in general, are often uninterested in matters environmental.

AF: What is Mountain Top Removal and what effect is it having on communities and ecologies in Appalachia?

Mountain Top Removal (MTR) is a form of strip mining that has existed since the 1970s. Its use was increased about ten years ago in West Virginia, and in the past three years its use has been accelerated to an all-time high. Instead of starting from the top and digging down to the coal seam, in MTR huge drills are used to bore holes into the sides of a mountain until they hit coal. Then the hole is packed with explosives and the top of the mountain is literally blown off. In most cases, the rubble, or "overburden," is then pushed over into the surrounding valleys, burying the any headwaters that were there. So far over 1200 miles of headwater streams, in West Virginia alone, have been buried by this process, know as valley filling. Geologically speaking, the coal seams that exist in these mountains also play an important part in maintaining the water table by creating an impermeable layer that disperses water into the surrounding area instead of letting it sink. The combined effect of the loss of streams and the removal of the coal has led to a drop in the water levels, which has taken quite a toll on local communities, many of which rely on wells for their water. Water quality has also been declining because of the chemical runoff created by coal washing. Another danger around MTR sites is slurry spills. The waste from these processes is stored in large slurry ponds, which are often simply surrounding valleys dammed up with over-burden. Last December there was a spill from one of these dams, operated by Massey Energy's Marfork Coal Company, in which 10,000 gallons of heavy metal-laden sludge was dumped into a stream, affecting a five-mile area. In October of 2000, a spill occurred in Kentucky that the Environmental Protection Agency has called "the worst environmental disaster ever in the Southeast." One site where Mountain Justice Summer (MJS) focused a number of its actions was at the Marsh Fork Elementary School which sits below an over 2 billion gallon slurry pond.

The end product of MTR, of course, is that Appalachia is disappearing. Even the most lauded reclamation efforts look more like a golf course than the incredibly diverse mountain forests that existed before the mining. The mountains are being topped off, and in the process the people and communities that existed there are being driven away. Degrading water supplies, constant blasting, huge clouds of dust, dwindling numbers of jobs, and over-loaded trucks barrelling down tight mountain roads are just a few of the factors that force many families to leave. And as more and more land becomes vacant, the coal companies just buy the land up cheap and expand their mine.

AF: In Britain the move to electricity generation through nuclear power, and later the development of strip-mining, was a means to break the power of mining communities which were a source of resistance to capital, is the story in Appalachia a similar one in regard to the technique of Mountain Top Removal?

Absolutely. The switch to Mountain Top Removal has allowed the companies to greatly reduce the number of employees that they require. In the 1960s coal employed 150,000 West Virginians. Today, despite much higher levels of coal production, it employs less than 15,000, many of who are still employed in deep mines, which continue to disappear as cheap MTR

coal makes deep mining uncompetitive. There are even instances of workers being brought in from other states to fill jobs on MTR sites. This tactic is employed so that the workers won't worry about the long term effects of what they're doing and so that the company can provide as few jobs as possible, speeding the evacuation of the community and the expansion of their mine. The current excuse that the coal industry is using is that they need to start bringing in an immigrant labour force because there aren't enough qualified West Virginians who want to work in the mines, which is simply untrue.

AF: What sort of actions took place during last year's Mountain Justice Summer?

The spectrum of actions was pretty wide. There were lots of rallies and demonstrations outside the offices of coal supporters and government buildings. We have done lots of information gathering and distributing, like the listening projects, where volunteers went into the communities to ask people about their experiences with MTR and the coal companies, or flyering and distributing our publications while doing street theatre. We had a number of coal sludge lemonade stands, showing folks outside the coalfields what the by-product of coal washing looks like. During our actions in Lexington we served the President of the Kentucky Coal Association a bowl of coal sludge, which he actually dipped his finger in and ate! On two different occasions we had folks arrested for refusing to leave the offices of the Massey Energy Corporation until they were allowed to deliver demands. We had a two-day march across West Virginia, and there was a march and rally for the international day of action against climate change outside the Massey Headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. There was a hunger strike at the Governor's office in West Virginia. And at the end of the summer we blockaded of one of the mine sites in Tennessee.

AF: Two particular parts of Mountain Justice Summer interested me, the emphasis on training for participants, and the "listen-in" where residents told participants of their experiences, can you tell us more about these?

We had the beginning-of-summer trainings so that we could get all of our volunteers on the same page in terms of our commitment to non-violence, to educate them on what was going on, and to ensure that they respected the communities in which we worked.

The listening projects, as we called them, were probably one of the best things we did all summer. The idea was to go into the communities and get the locals to start talking because they knew more about the effects of MTR than we did. All the volunteers that I've spoken with have really positive stories about the listening projects. It helped give many of our volunteers perspective on the history and experience of the communities in which they were working, and it definitely helped ease many of the community members to the presence of a crew of out-of-towners in what are normally pretty isolated communities.

AF: Mountain Justice Summer seems to have been forged through an alliance between Earth First (EF!) and some community groups. Other community groups seemed more wary of Earth First!. Why was that, and how did that change over the course of last summer?

There was some hesitation with a few of the community groups. With some groups, such as Coal River Mountain Watch, there wasn't any tension. They did state initially that they didn't want any violence or property destruction and the EF!ers said that they didn't see property destruction as appropriate in this campaign, so it went really smoothly. Other groups, Save Our Cumberland Mountains (SOCM) being the extreme, didn't want to have anything to do with EF! and therefore MJS. There was also a spectrum of groups in between the two extremes. It is interesting, though, that after last summer we gained a lot of credibility through the effectiveness of our campaign and now groups like SOCM are much more willing to work with us. It should be interesting to see how that plays out this coming summer.

AF: Is there a direct link between the resistance to mountain top removal and the long proud history of labour struggle in Appalachia?

I think many of us MJS volunteers view ourselves as decedents of that struggle. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), once one of the hotbeds of radical labour in this country, hasn't exerted much power to try and save Appalachia. To my knowledge they don't have a firm position on MTR, but they do have a general "pro-coal" stance despite the obvious effects that MTR has on jobs and especially union jobs. I feel like their resistance to change has really led to their failure. The face of the struggle has to change when the company changes its tactics. After 100 years of big coal exploiting the people of Appalachia and robbing us of our rich resources, they've decided that they don't need the people. Its not just about extracting greater value from our labour now, it's about literally driving out the communities that have existed here for hundreds of years. If the UMWA can't recognize what's happening then its up to another movement to pick up the struggle to preserve the strength and dignity of Appalachian communities. I like to think that that's us.

Actually Blair Mountain, the site of a battle in 1921 between 10,000 union miners and company thugs supported by local law enforcement, is an MTR site. Our allies in West Virginia are trying to stop the mining by getting the mountain registered as a historic landmark.

AF: Why was there such a strong emphasis on non-violence and on not committing acts of sabotage on the part of Mountain Justice Summer? It seems at odds with what little I know of the traditions of popular struggle in Appalachia, see for instance the massive amount of sabotage during the wildcat strikes of the 1960s and 1970s.

We decided that the decision to use sabotage and other forms of property destruction should be made by the communities. From our position, as a regional coalition, it wasn't our right to escalate the conflict when the violence would certainly fall on the shoulders of the community residents. Since most of the volunteers that came into our campaign were from out of state, we decided that it wouldn't have been right to start a fight that we wouldn't have been around to accept the consequences of.

AF: What specific class based approach did the IWW bring to this campaign, or did you need to bring such an approach, is it more widespread than your group?

The IWW wasn't officially involved in the campaign. Appalachia isn't a place where we're very strong, unfortunately. The involvement of the union was in some publicity, a front-page article about the environmental and working class implications of MTR in our paper, and the personal involvement of between half a dozen and a dozen Wobblies in the campaign. There definitely wasn't the kind of organizing that was being done during Redwood Summer,

continued on page twenty two

but the reason that I think this struggle drew Wobblies into it was that it already had strong community and working-class roots. Many of the folks in the community groups we are working with are ex-coal miners. The strength of the community support for the campaign is one of the most important things about it, and it isn't uncommon for our allies to talk about the history of their family's struggle against the coal companies. There is definitely more that needs to be done, though, to reach out to labour because the need for jobs is still the main argument that pro-MTR locals tell us, despite the long-term effect that MTR is having on jobs.

One good example of future work that's in the planning stages is a conference that's going to be happening in Kentucky. It will focus on creating a post-coal economy in Appalachia. Hopefully, as organizing for sustainable non-coal jobs continues, it will move in the direction of worker control.

AF: The IWW is often thought of as just a workplace orientated group, yet some Wobblies are involved in this campaign, and were involved in Redwood summer, why is this?

I personally can't see how it's so easy for so many environmentalists to disconnect labour and community struggles from environmental struggles. In the end it's always the working class that bears the brunt of environmental devastation. The coal companies have lots of money for ad campaigns and rallies that are supposed to convince us that working class folks in the coal fields like MTR, but we've seen polls have shown that most folks in West Virginia, for example, don't want MTR to be happening in their state. Middle-class environmental groups, with their inability to speak the language of community members, and their often-arrogant attitude towards working class locals, have created a rift that shouldn't exist.

MJS is really about community self-determination and challenging the history of feudal control that the coal companies have had in the region. Despite its resources, the state of West Virginia is one of the poorest in the US, and the poorest counties in the state are the ones with the most coal. This is a matter of robbery by the capitalist class any way that you look at it, and it makes sense for Wobblies to stand in solidarity with these communities.

Wobblies involved in Redwood summer went a step further to actually organizing timber workers. The environmentalists and working locals have the same enemy, and the less we allow ourselves to get pitted against one another the better we will all fare. The working class locals want sustainable, good paying jobs so that they can support their families, and the IWW (and other labour groups) need to be involved to help workers realize that they have the power to protect their communities AND provide jobs that will exist for future generations.

AF: Did the effort to interest radicals in the struggle in Appalachia catch much criticism of the 'this is just a N-I-M-B-Y (not in my back yard)' sort? Were there other problems along those lines? For instance I get the impression of some emphasis on visitors needing to respect the norms of the host groups.

I haven't heard anyone use that criticism. In terms of our organization I don't think that we have a NIMBY mentality at all. Mountain Justice Summer was created to connect the struggles against MTR that existed across Appalachia both because of the strength that a regional campaign grants local struggles and because groups in each state want to put an end to MTR for good and not just push the destruction over to another community.

In terms of respecting local norms, last summer there was a great emphasis placed on dispelling many of the myths about Appalachian people and culture. Many, if not most, Americans, think of Appalachians as backwards, violent hillbillies. The hillbilly stereotype was created by coal companies as an explanation for the violence and destitution that their rapid industrialization had created. The image was picked-up and run with by national media and missionaries, who returned to their middle-class congregation to get funding for their efforts by telling stories about violent, wild people desperately needing to be saved. Talking about these myths, their origin and their effects allowed us to try and prevent folks coming in from another region and looking down on the locals we were trying to work with. It's also easier for folks who live outside the coalfields to accept the devastation when they can dehumanise the people it is directly effecting. I actually had someone in a city where I was distributing information say to me, "As long as I get cheap power, I don't mind pissing off a bunch of hillbillies."

AF: Unlike in Ireland at the moment, people in this sort of campaign in the United States seem to be subject to quite a bit of non-state harassment, violence, and counter-protests. Can you tell us a bit about that?

The coal companies have a long history of violent intimidation tactics and its no different now. Larry Gibson, a very active anti-MTR community member, has been subject to over 100 instances of violent harassment, including the shooting and hanging of his dogs, vandalism of his solar panels, and arson of buildings on his land, and he has personally been shot at and driven off of the road. This is all because the coal company wants his land on Kayford Mountain, West Virginia, which is a 50-acre oasis in the middle of a 10,000 acre Mountain Top Mine.

The other egregious instance of violence was against activists involved in a blockade on Zeb Mountain in Tennessee. The local law enforcement turned their backs while company employees tried to run over folks involved in the blockade. We have tape of the confrontation with their truck, but at this point the police forced everyone not in the blockade to leave, and a company employee stole the only remaining video camera. Several company employees also pushed over a tripod that was suspending an activist 35 feet above the road, and kicked one of the activists there supporting the blockaders to the ground. The police then gave these company employees, who clearly had no problem with injuring activists, the cutting equipment to get people out of the car that was part of the blockade, rather than removing the activists from the car themselves. The company employees then dragged the car out of the road with one person still attached to it, clearing just enough room for their trucks to pass within inches of her body.

AF: What are the plans for Mountain Justice Summer 2, to take place in the summer of 2006?

We're making a few changes in the structure of the campaign. Last year there was a main body of MJSers that moved from state to state, but this year we're going to focus more on placing people in each state for their whole commitment. Instead of a big group travelling around, folks will be more involved in a specific locality and will come together for a few big actions during the course of the summer. We're also going to try to do more solidarity work with other communities struggling against the coal companies. We've already been reaching out to the indigenous community in Black Mesa that is also fighting coal extraction on their land.

ramón acín aquilué

(Born Huesca 1888- d. 1936)

"We have as our flag the love of culture, the cult of fraternity and liberty"

Apart from the usual names - Velásquez, Goya, Miró, Picasso - many Spanish artists remain little known throughout the world. Among those who do deserve better attention is Ramón Acín Aquilué. He was a man of many aspects, a committed anarchist militant, a libertarian teacher, a writer and an artist of the avant garde.

Ramón Acín was born in Huesca in northern Aragon, Spain, in 1888. It was then a small town. In 1913 he was in Barcelona and helped set up the magazine 'La Ira' (Anger). Its subtitle was "organ of expression of the disgust and anger of the people". In that year he got a grant to travel round Spain and to create large oil paintings, including 'A View of Granada'.

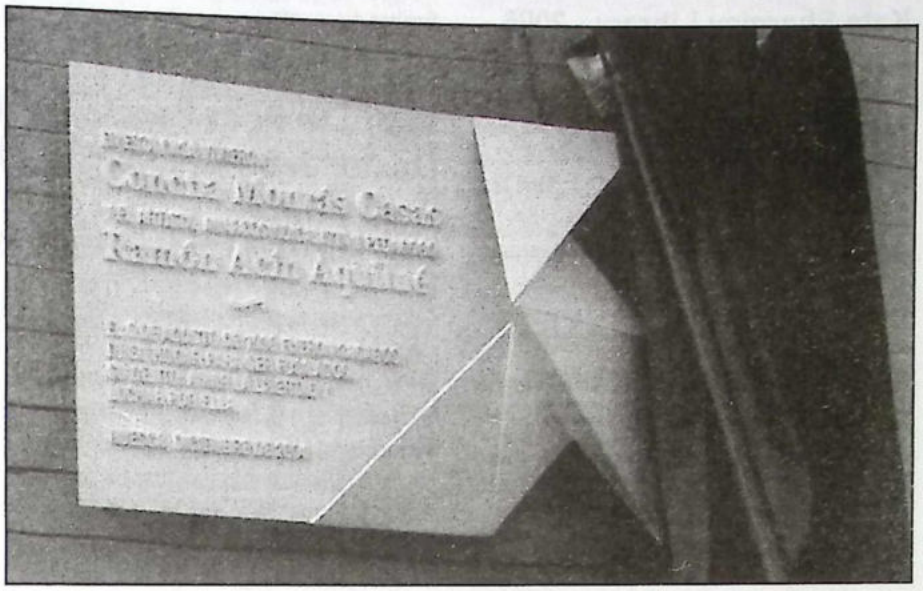
He was a producer of droll cartoons, informed by a biting political humour, against the Church, war and bullfighting. He was also a gifted sculptor who used metal and magic lanterns in his work. He exhibited in Madrid with his sculptures composed of cut-up metal plaques ('The Dancing Girl', 'The Garrote') which were met with acclaim. He also produced large "origami" paper sculptures of birds.

Inspired by the libertarian educational theories of Francisco Ferrer, Joaquín Costa and Célestin Freinet, Ramón Acín endeavoured to continue in this form of education when he gained the post of teacher of design at the Escuela Normale in Huesca in 1916. He organised free evening classes for workers and in 1922 set up his own academy of design in his house, informed by libertarian theories of education. He organised the first National Teachers' Conference in Huesca in 1932, where he expounded the theories of Freinett alongside Herminio Almendros (father of the film-maker). A second conference was organised in 1935.

Ramón Acín contributed to many anarchist magazines in Aragon and in Catalonia: *Floreal, El Talión, Cultura y Acción, Lucha Social, Solidaridad Obrera*. He attended many conferences of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT, the mass anarcho-syndicalist union) speaking for the sections in Huesca. His popularity there meant that he could easily have run for mayor, but he refrained from this because of his anarchist convictions. He wrote over a hundred articles. Alongside the straightforward political pieces could be found his interest in the environment and ecology, his arguments against bullfighting, art commentaries, autobiographical pieces etc. He also organised various conferences on a whole range of subjects: Russian children; the writer Gómez de la Serna; anti-electoralism.

His articles earnt him several stretches in prison. Participation in some of the anarchist uprisings meant that he had to seek exile in Paris in 1926 and again in 1931, where he met artists of the avant garde. A friend of Picasso and Dali, he published several artistic manifestos, including one on Goya in 1928, which criticised the official commemorations of that artist. With a large sum of money that he won in a lottery, he financed a film by Luis Buñuel, 'Las Hurdes' (1933), which depicted the spiritual and material poverty of the area around Huesca. He and his compañera Conchita Monrás educated their daughters Katia and Sol themselves.

In 1936, the authorities in Huesca refused to arm the people and the army and Guardia Civil were easily able to take power. In the massacre that then took place, Ramón Acín and Conchita were among many to face the firing squads. The film maker Buñuel wrote that, "When the war started, in 1936, an extreme right group turned up to arrest him at Huesca. He managed to easily escape them. The fascists then seized his wife and announced that they were going to shoot her if Acín did not present himself. The next day he did. They shot the two of them". All his works of art at his house were destroyed by fascists too, and other sculptures were hidden by them. In 1980 a recognition of his artistic work led to exhibitions in Huesca and Barcelona.



Above: a plaque commerorating the lives of Ramon and Conchita. Right: Conchita and Ramon with paper bird.

We present summaries of three new excellent value pamphlets from Kate Sharpley Library, plus one of their slightly older pamphlets.
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Konstantinos Speras: The Life And Activities Of A Greek Anarcho-syndicalist, by Leonardos Kottis.

Kate Sharpley Library - 2006, £3, 10 pages

Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) was born on the Greek island of Serifos. Whilst working in Egypt as a tobacco worker, he came into contact with anarchists, who were mostly Greek and Italian immigrants. On his return to Greece he became extremely active organizing amongst the workers. He took part in the big tobacco workers strike in Kavala in 1914, and was imprisoned for his activities.
He returned to his home island and supported the miners strike there in 1916. There was bloody repression and four miners were killed by the police. He was again imprisoned in the aftermath, writing a pamphlet on the strike whilst in jail. He advanced anarchosyndicalist ideas in the unions, calling for independence from political parties. Like many anarchists of the period around the world, taken in by Lenin's 'libertarian rhetoric' and the seeming triumph of the working class with the Russian Revolution, he joined the emerging Communist Party (then called the Socialist Workers Party). He was soon expelled as an "anti-party element" in 1920. The Communists also attempted to expel him from the unions, but failed.
In 1921 Speras was again imprisoned after the tram workers strike. Communist persecution of him continued and he found it difficult to get a job because of this. In the end they succeeded in expelling him from his union in 1926. He continued supporting strikes in the 30s, and wrote a History of the Working Class Movement, which was never published and has now vanished. He was arrested, imprisoned or sent into exile 109 times! His last spell in prison was during the Metaxas dictatorship when he was sent to the island of Skopelos. He was released half-dead in 1940, but fortunately was saved by a doctor who treated him free.
In 1943 Captain Orestis, one of the leaders of ELAS, the Communist guerilla front, called him to a meeting outside of Athens. He was beheaded and his remains scattered. He was one of dozens of Trotskyists, anarchists and left communists murdered by the Communist Party. This pamphlet tells his story, one which deserves to be rescued from obscurity.

With The Poor People Of The Earth: A Biography Of Doctor John Creaghe Of Sheffield & Buenos Aires by Alan O'Toole.

Kate Sharpley Library - 2005, £3, 32 pages

This is an an account of the colourful life of the Irish doctor John Creaghe (1841-1920). He emigrated in the mid-1860s to the United States and from there to Argentina in 1874. He was destined for a brilliant career. However, the grinding poverty he saw in Argentina brought him round to to a radical outlook. The Italian anarchist Malatesta, who was then living in Argentina, was involved in organising amongst workers and Creaghe became involved in this himself.
In 1890 Creaghe moved to England and settled in Sheffield. Here he got in touch with the anarchists. His first public appearance in that city was his fiery speech at a public meeting held to commemorate the deaths of the Chicago anarchist martyrs. Creaghe earned his living as a "sixpenny doctor" administering to the poor . He also engaged in a series of rent strikes. He founded the paper The Sheffield Anarchist which had quite an influence on the Sheffield scene.
By now Creaghe had given up any hope of a revolutionary situation in Britain in the short term and he returned to Argentina in 1894. Here he brought out another anarchist paper, the monthly El Oprimo (The Oppression). Later he was involved in the setting up of the FORA (Federación Obrera Regional Argentina), a mass workers organization with an anarchist-communist line. Creaghe had a key role in the emergence and continuation of the anarchist paper La Protesta which had a distinguished role in Argentinian history.
In 1911, the developing Mexican revolution led Creaghe to go to Los Angeles, where he joined the editorial board of Regeneracion, the paper of the Mexican anarchists. He visited Mexico on several trips, and brought the attention of Latin American and US anarchists to the Zapata movement in southern Mexico.
Joint repression by the Mexican and US governments came down heavily on Regeneración. Creaghe was involved in a campaign with Emma Goldman to free the leading Mexican anarchist Flores Magón who had been arrested by the US authorities.
Creaghe moved to Washington where he died in poverty in 1920. He had given 30 years to the anarchist movement. Another anarchist veteran, Mat Kavanagh, was to remark: "He was one of those remarkable personalities that Anarchism alone seems able to produce, who, seeking not place or power, live to serve the cause of Human Emancipation".

Against All Tyranny! Essays On Anarchism In Brazil by Edgar Rodrigues, Renato Ramos and Alexandre Samis.

Kate Sharpley Library - 2003, £3, 32 pages

Yet another fascinating pamphlet on Brazil from the Kate Sharpley Library, currently out of print but should still be available elsewhere. This is an historical outline of the Brazilian anarchist movement. Many people emigrated to Brazil from Europe and with them came the anarchist idea. Brazilian - as well as Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Russian and German - workers contributed to the movement. Among them was the black worker Domingos Passos, nicknamed the Brazilian Bakunin, who perished after being exiled to a jungle area in the late 20s; the German activist Friedrich Kniestedt; and the teacher, writer and poer Maria Lacerda de Moura who looked beyond the winning of female suffrage to real liberation for women.

Paul Avrich
1931-2006

Paul Avrich, historian of the anarchist movement, died on February 16th 2006 in New York as a result of complications from Alzheimer's disease, from which he was suffering for the last few years.
He was born in Brooklyn in 1931. His mother was an actress in the Yiddish theatre and his father, a dress manufacturer. His family had origins in Odessa and Avrich was able to go there to study after Kruschev, leader of the Soviet Union, authorised student exchanges in 1959. There, whilst working on his thesis 'The Russian Revolution and the Factory Committees' (published in 1961) he discovered the Kronstadt uprising and the role of anarchists in the Revolution. This interest in anarchism was strengthened when he met anarchists at a meeting convened by 'Der Freie Arbeiter Stimme', the Yiddish anarchist paper.

Paul Avrich's first book was the massively informative 'The Russian Anarchists' (1967, soon to be republished by AK Press). Over the course of the years he wrote ten more books, as well as articles for reviews. Another book on Russian anarchism was his 'Anarchists in the Russian Revolution', a collection of documents from the period, with his commentaries. His 'Kronstadt 1921' examined all the available evidence on the sailors uprising against the Bolsheviks.
He next tackled the anarchist movement in the United States. He wrote The Haymarket Tragedy in 1984, about the events that led up to the State murder of a number of anarchists who had organised among the Chicago working class, and in 1991 wrote 'Sacco and Vanzetti', about the Italian American anarchists framed and murdered by the State. Others of his works were 'An American Anarchist: the life of Voltairine de Cleyre' (1978), the biography of a woman who devoted her life to anarchism after the deaths of the Chicago anarchists, and 'Anarchist Portraits' (1988), which not only looked at the heavy hitters like Bakunin and Kropotkin, but also chose to sketch out the lives of lesser known individuals like the Englishman Charles Mowbray and John "Chummy" Fleming, active in Australia. But perhaps his finest work was 'Anarchist Voices'. He conducted over 200 interviews with veterans of the movement in the States, and then brought out a selection of these with his notes and commentary. The anarchist movement springs to life in this book, with many intriguing stories about fascinating personalities. Fervour and conviction jostle with the disillusionment and tragedies of those who witnessed the ebb of the movement and the problems of poverty, infirmity and old age (the full length version has just been published by AK Press, 2005).
Avrich was a likeable and friendly person and it was this conviviality that opened up many veterans, sometimes suspicious and lonely, to his probings. Above all, he let these old anarchists talk. Not only that, he put them in contact with each other, and became a friend of many, visiting many of them on a regular basis, and seeing them vanish from this life. He never openly called himself an anarchist, but he had great admiration and affection for those who had given so much of their lives for 'the Idea'. He donated 20,000 of the documents he had collected to the Library of Congress. He gave generously to CIRA (Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme), the anarchist archive and library based in Switzerland both financially and with contributions of documents, as well as the Russian publication of Voline's The Unknown Revolution. He did so much to save many anarchist lives from obscurity, lives that were worth recognizing and recording. Now he himself has gone. The anarchist movement has lost a great friend.

Santos - The Barcelona Of Brazil: Anarchism And Class Struggle In A Port City by Edgar Rodrigues.
Kate Sharpley Library - 2005, £3, 16 pages

In the late 19th and early 20th century the Brazilian town of Santos was a centre of unrest, with many strikes. The first general strike was in 1905 and a number of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups appeared. This proved victorious and Santos began to be called the Brazilian Barcelona because of the strength of the working class movement and the strength of the anarchist movement. This was reinforced by the arrival of anarchist orators and activists of Italian and Spanish origin. Not only did anarchists organize in the workplaces but they set up Social Cultural Centres with well-equipped libraries, amateur drama and music groups, literacy classes, and trades education. They staged revolutionary and anti-clerical plays which spread their idea far and wide.
Vicious repression came during the general strike of 1921. Many strikers were arrested. The anarchist and syndicalist movements bounced back the following year but the foundation of the Brazilian Communist Party caused splits in the movement. The police seized this opportunity to close down the anarchist groups and syndicalist organisations. This pamphlet tells a tale of a fascinating period in Brazilian history, full of accounts of extraordinary anarchist personalities.

tom bell

1867-1942

Thomas Hastie Bell was born in Edinburgh in 1867. He should not be confused with another Tom Bell, fellow Scot , Red Clydesider and one of the founders of the Communist Party. He acquired fluency in French, Italian, Spanish and German thanks to his job as a ship's engineer, visiting all the Mediterranean countries, South Africa, the United States and South America. As a young man he joined the Scottish Land and Labour League and in the 1880s became an anarchist through his association with the Socialist League. He was active in the Freedom group in London. In 1892 he returned to Edinburgh and carried on intense anarchist propaganda with J. Blair Smith and McCabe. He established a friendship there with Patrick Geddes, the biologist and town planner and persuaded him to bring over Elisée Reclus, the anarchist and geographer, to lecture at Edinburgh University. Emma Goldman mentions Bell "of whose propagandistic zeal and daring we had heard much in America".

Staying in Paris he had urged French anarchists to have open-air meetings, but they were reluctant. He went to the Place de la Republique, one of the most central and busiest squares, after having distributed handbills about meeting there the following Sunday afternoon. There was a big crowd there, also plenty of policemen. He climbed up a lamp-post padlocked to a crosspiece and started speaking. The police called for a file, but he continued speaking till his voice gave out and then nonchalantly produced the key. Police then threatened him with prosecution for "insults to the Army and the law" but all Paris laughed and the authorities decided not to prosecute. After 2 weeks in jail he was expelled as "too dangerous a man to be allowed loose in France". He married the anarchist John Turner's sister Lizzie.

On the visit of Tsar Nicholas II to Britain, Bell went with McCabe to Leith where he was landing. Separated and although surrounded by Highlanders, territorials and infantry, Bell and McCabe got through to the Tsar's carriage and shouted in his face "Down with the Russian tyrant! To hell with all the empires!". Again the authorities were not inclined to prosecute, because a Scottish jury would probably throw out any charges.

In 1898, Bell, who suffered from asthma all his life, went back to London and got a job as the (long-suffering) secretary to the man of letters Frank Harris, famous for his friendship with Oscar Wilde and his womanising, as revealed in his Life and Loves. Harris is suspected of stealing Bell's experiences as a cowboy near the Mexican border for his own fake cowboy memories. Through Harris, Bell got to know Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, George Bernard Shaw and others. Bell wrote a book about Wilde in his Oscar Wilde Without Whitewash in memory of those times, unfortunately never published, After 7 years in that position, he had a disagreement with Harris over the latter's biography, which he thought was unjust to Wilde. He went to New York in 1905, and in 1911 finally settled in the United States for good, becoming a farmer in Phoenix, Arizona. He spent the last 20 years of his life in Los Angeles. Both Bell's wife Lizzie Turner and his sister Jessie Bell Westwater emigrated with him to the USA and were involved in the movement. Throughout his life he remained active in the movement, maintaining lifelong friendships with Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Rudolf Rocker.

Rocker said, "I saw him again in Los Angeles, when he was an old man. He was ill. His mop of red hair and his bushy beard were now white. His giant frame (he was well over six foot) was bent. But his mind was active; he was still working and speaking for the movement".

In a letter to the Yiddish anarchist paper Die Fraye Arbeter Shtime in 1940, Bell declared, "We become in our old age crabby, blind, deaf, lame or asthmatic. And our movement is now completely overwhelmed in a gigantic world-wide wave of reaction. But, ah, when I look back to the glorious days and the glorious comrades of our young movement, I am stirred to the depths by affection and pride".

Tom Bell died in 1942 at the age of 75.

louisa sarah bevington

1845-1895

Louisa Bevington was born into a Quaker family on 18th May 1845, in St. John's Hill, Battersea. The occupation of her father was described as a "gentleman". She was the oldest of eight children, seven of whom were girls. She started writing verse at an early age. Not long after she published her second volume of poems in 1882, she went to Germany and in 1883 married a Munich artist Ignatz Felix Guggenberger. The marriage lasted less than 8 years and she returned to London in 1890. She began to frequent anarchist circles, restarting her career under her maiden name.

By the mid-1890s, Bevington knew many London anarchists and was recognized as an anarchist poet. She probably became acquainted with anarchism through meeting Charlotte Wilson, who had jointly founded the anarchist paper Freedom in 1886. Rejecting the tactics of the bomb and dynamite being espoused by some anarchists in Britain, she associated with the anarchist paper Liberty (subtitled: A Journal of Anarchist Communism), edited by the tailor James Tochatti from January 1894. She wrote many articles and poems for it, as well as for other anarchist papers, like the Torch, edited by the two young nieces, Helen and Olivia, of the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She was involved in efforts to set up an organisation, the Anarchist Communist Alliance and wrote an Anarchist Manifesto for it , which was distributed on 1st May 1895 (the Alliance appears not to have survived long).

At the age of 50 in 1895, Bevington was still active but was suffering from bad health, namely heart disease that had been afflicting her for years. She managed to write some articles for Liberty in that year and her last collection of poems for Liberty Press. She died on 28th November 1895 in Lechmere, as the result of dropsy and mitral disease of the heart. Whilst her poems, very much a product of late Victorian times, have not aged all that well, the articles and pamphlets she wrote in which she strongly argued for anarchism, still bear a look.

You can find some of her pamphlets and poems on the web www.mantex.co.uk/ou/aa810/vww-08.htm

Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

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Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It: Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Other Anarchist Federation publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

NEW EDITION: Defending Anonymity - Free - ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies Donation + SAE.

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NEW ONLINE: Beating The Poll Tax - a relevant 'blast from the past', our out-of-print pamphlet that encouraged and analysed the rise of mass revolt against the Community Charge in 1989/90. Available from www.afed.org.uk

Anarchism As We See It - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

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The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

Work - Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us - £1 - The title says it all really.

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Aims and principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps you would just like to be put on our mailing list.

Whatever you want to find out from us, please get in touch.

Write to our national contact at:

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Alternatively you can email us at **info@afed.org.uk** or visit or website: **www.afed.org.uk**

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FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

The anniversary issue

Features on the Anarchist Federation, in its 20th year, the Hungarian revolution and the British general strike

Plus... interview with a Belarusian anarchist, decroissance, anarchist lives and more

Organise!

Organise is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims is provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responces from readers and spur the debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be **15th March 2007**. Please send all contributions to the address on the left. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disk (PC or MAC format). Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk.

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the articles and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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editorial

Welcome to the 20th anniversary issue of Organise!, for revolutionary anarchism as always.

After we covered the celebration of 70 years since the height of the Spanish revolution in 1936 within the pages of our previous issue, Organise! now brings you the other promised anniversary articles on the 1926 General Strike in Britain and the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Mass revolt against governments has happened before, and it can happen again if we can continue to build the anarchist movement in Britain and internationally.

In the more recent past, much has happened that the Anarchist Federation has engaged with practically and theoretically. We won't dwell on the details in the editorial. Just look inside and read our open letter where we summarise some of what we do as the AF and ask some questions - we hope you will consider answering them. We also look back over the second decade of Organise!, amounting to some 25 issues since we published our first ten year review.

As we approach next year's local elections in Britain we know we have to endure the mainstream media bombarding us until we are sick with endless trivia about the two party race between Labour and Conservative. While this is happening, the warmongering and increasing repression of the State will no doubt continue unabated. The authoritarian marxist-leninist Left have no answers. The Socialist Party is in disarray once again, emanating from splits in the Scottish SP. The trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, supposedly anti-parliamentary (and with its claws firmly in the Stop The War Coalition), has cynically put itself behind the electioneering campaigns of Respect and has even stood candidates in council elections. Next year, will it yet again ask us to 'vote Labour without illusions' to 'keep the Tories out', because Labour is still closer to the workers? Any remaining illusions, including the worth of voting for politicians, have surely been dashed over the last decade of Labour rule. As anarchists always say, voting changes nothing. Supporting or lobbying politicians only encourages them, to the detriment of self-activity. The Anarchist Federation does not claim to have all the answers, but the anarchist tradition has been influential in many past revolutions and in contemporary struggles. Anarchist communism has endured, and it is growing internationally. Now is the time for those who are identifying with anarchism in the environmental and anti-capitalist movement to take a serious look at organisation. Will real change come from the acts of small direct action groups or from the effect of our communicating more effectively with working class and disaffected middle class people, so we can 'do it' together? As the State increases its powers through repressive laws and surveillance we can expect the police to come down hard on clandestine direct actions of any kind. And in the future, the mainstream press may well choose to ignore the reporting of what governments will increasingly term 'terrorist' activities, further starving such spectacular events of the publicity they seem to depend on.

What is the difference between small scale insurrectionary activism and mass revolution? This question is an important one that the anarchist movement in Britain will need to answer in the next decade. The approach has got to be about gaining wider support for anarchist principles and aims amongst 'ordinary' people who we know are being attacked and stand to gain so much by the ending, not reforming, of the capitalist system. We will certainly need more generalised support to defend social centres from future victimisation, which is bound to come. Propaganda is part of this, as is the radicalising work we can do in our workplaces and local communities. Anarchist organisations also help provide memory of gains and losses from the choice of certain tactics and strategies. We know what we want – the destruction of capitalism and a better world. But we are small in numbers and we will remain small unless we reach out. The AF believes that all this is done most effectively in anarchist organisations.

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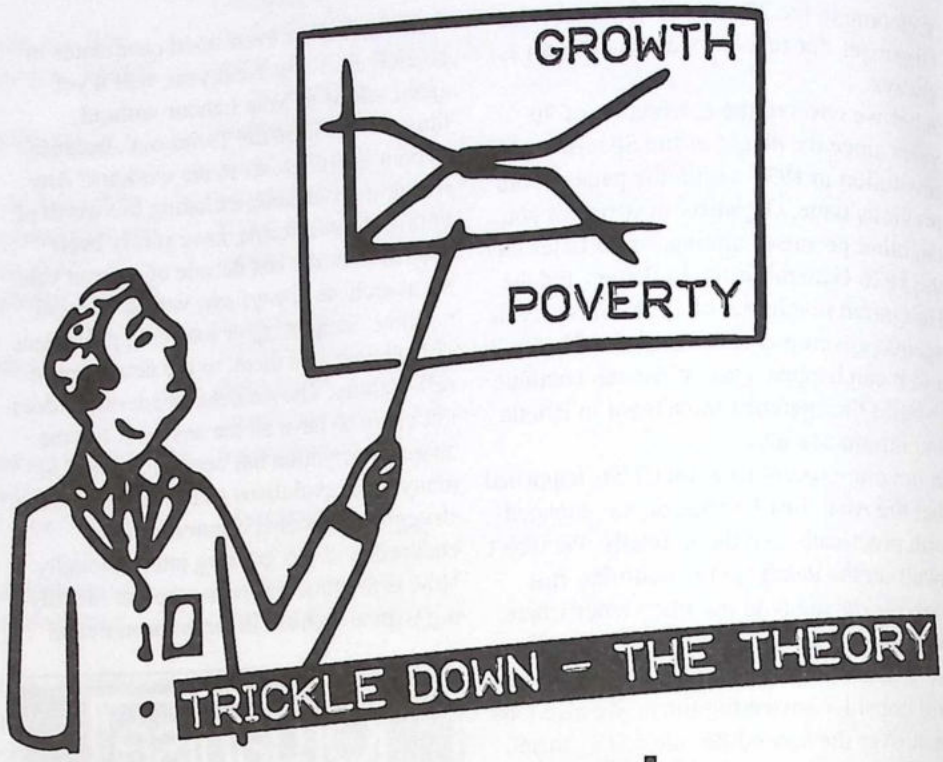
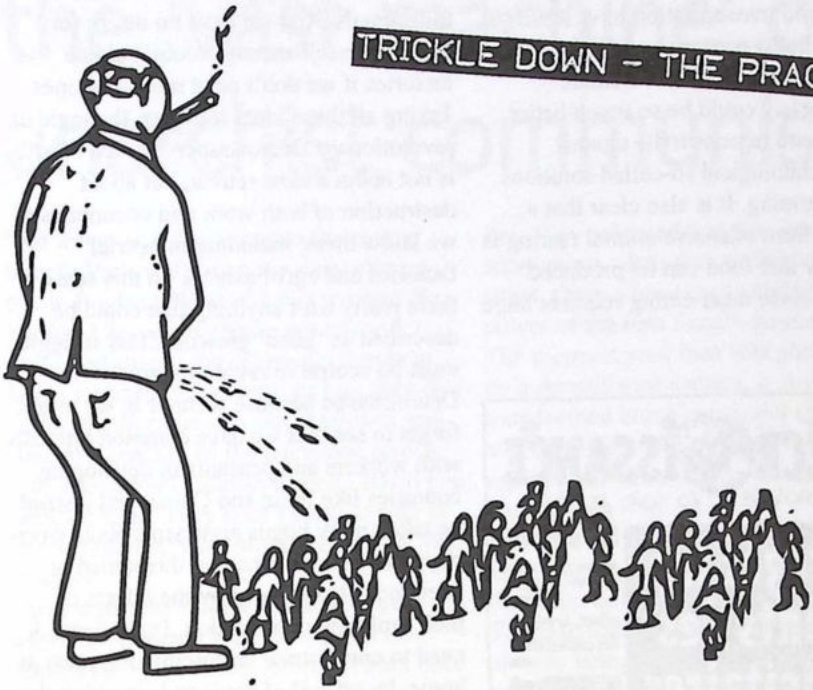


growth and degrowth

Revolutionary approaches to saving the planet and making a happier future

"It is a disquieting reality that even though there has been increased economic growth for many years now in the Western world, a serious proportion of the population is worse off, few are actually benefiting while a tiny number are seriously better off."
This statement was made in 1997 by Green economist Richard Douthwaite and led off his article Good Growth and Bad Growth, which distills points he made in a book The Growth Illusion. But does anything exist that can be described as good growth? This article investigates the idea of growth and in particular looks at the spread of interest amongst both reformists and revolutionaries in France (including the French Anarchist Federation) in the idea of Décroissance that can be translated alternately as 'degrowth', 'ungrowth', or 'retreat'.
Economic growth is central to the ideology of modern capitalism. In capitalist economies, growth is usually related to a measurement known as Gross Domestic Product, GDP, defined as the value of all goods and services purchased in a country over a specified period. Growth is said to occur if this value increases, and most nation states are obsessed that this happens, year by year. But this says nothing about whether spending was necessary, or who did the spending. Consumption of any goods or services, whether needed or not, contributes to growth.
It has never been clearer that growth is at the expense of the well-being of most people on earth and the planet itself. Most of us do not have a say in what is produced from the Earth's resources, because the land and means of production are owned by a minority of individuals. Shareholders of companies do not usually care and are certainly not encouraged to think about the consequences of 'getting a good return' on their investments. The idea of the consumer in developed countries also depends on spending being good, whatever it is on, without a care about waste of energy or raw materials, or the working conditions of the people who provide the items or service. Consumer goods pushed by marketing and advertising campaigns all contribute to GDP whether or not they are really needed. Money spent on destroying the environment (like cutting down trees for profit), and even money spent cleaning up oil-spills, all contribute to this insane measure of monetary value since it all makes profit for someone. For the technologically 'advanced' nation states, making war abroad is especially good for growth because it involves spending huge amounts money on weapons that quickly become obsolete if they are not used, and especially if they ensure their corporations get the contracts for rebuilding the damage (as is the case for UK and US companies in Iraq). Perceived insecurity at home from the 'war on terror' is also a boon for the economy, as this helps companies sell surveillance technologies, fingerprinting machines, ID databases and the like.
The great lie of the free market is that everyone benefits from growth due to the so-called 'trickle-down' effect. In fact there is a growing rate of consumption by the rich and middle classes in the developed countries, whilst the rest of us, whether we are the workers (or unemployed) in those countries or part of the poor majority in the 'developing' world actually have access to very little of the world's wealth. Ecologists are fond of telling us that for everyone to consume at the same rate as the US, we'd need several Earths just to grow enough food, never mind the energy required and the effect of energy use on global warming. Put another way, the 'ecological footprint' of most developed countries, and especially the cities within them, is much much bigger that the size of the land mass of those countries. It is only by poorer countries producing food and through irreversible damage to the environment that average consumption per person in richer countries can be so great. If the rich and middle classes of the rest of the world start to consume at this rate, the damage would only increase (this is the often quoted fear of Chinese and Indian industrial development).
The idea that if countries get richer by increasing GDP everyone will benefit to some degree has been challenged by some economists over the last few decades and some have come up with alternative measures to GDP. Measures such as the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) attempt to capture the effects of disregard for people and the environment in the endless search for increased profits that contribute to growth. They attempt to include the effects of unemployment caused



by companies automating production, for example. What these newer measures show is that whilst globalisation has helped increase growth in the rich economies as indicated by higher and higher GDPs, other measures like the ISEW have gone down very sharply since the 1970s (even in Australia, Germany and the UK) and gaps in average wealth between rich and poor people, and between rich and poor countries, are getting greater.

In France, Décroissance (degrowth) is an idea that has raised considerable interest in the French Anarchist Federation recently. It has its origins in a 1979 book by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen "La Décroissance" which is related to his 'bioeconomic' theory. On the more popularist side, there is a bi-monthly paper Décroissance published by Casseurs de Pub which has an anti-consumerist 'more is not better' theme that rails against packaging of vegetables, 5-blade Gillette razors, advertising brands in schools and cars (including Formula 1 racing), similar to the Adbusters approach.

The central idea of Décroissance, similar to the one that gives rise to the need for sustainability indices, is that perpetual increase in economic indicators like GDP are not sustainable by the ecosystem of the Earth. It has four principles:

1. The current economic system depends on limited resources; but raw material and energy are fundamentally constrained by scientific principles (second law of thermodynamics)
2. Economic growth and ecological impacts are tightly coupled.
3. The goods and services produced by economies are not the only wealth; quality of life (joie de vivre), social relations, equality and justice are other kinds of wealth.
4. Companies do not take into account the poverty of consumer products related to quality of life.

Décroissance then is about moving from unsustainable economic growth to a reduction of growth in money terms, whilst increasing quality of life and other kinds of 'wealth'. It is about simple living and localisation of production and consumption, in opposition to a globalised economy. It also fits well with the anti-development views of many greens like Edward Golding, founder of the Ecologist magazine, who argues that economic development of the third world countries actually creates poverty for most of the people who live in them. Capitalists see poverty reduction coming from increased spending power, but this says nothing about who in developing countries gets to do the spending of money made by the brokers of deals with multinationals, IMF loans, or bilateral trade agreements with rich nations like the US, which always come with heavy strings attached. Even the notion of 'sustainable development' is debunked by ecologists, especially as this has become so twisted by governments and multinational companies, who want us to believe they can solve the world's environmental problems by developing 'greener' technologies like hybrid cars, or by increasing use of nuclear power instead of fossil fuels, without affecting economic growth.

Anti-growth views are challenging to social-democrats and marxists who argue that growth is only bad in the wrong hands, that people are only starving and disease-ridden because of unfair distribution. All it needs is a restructuring of society and the problem is solved! On the other hand, the idea of Décroissance seems to side with a much more negative and even catastrophist outlook about the world, supported by other contemporary theories like 'Peak Oil' which predicts that a slow down in the rate of global oil production is inevitable in the next couple of decades which will have a huge effect on the world economy. James Lovelock, the somewhat crazed British scientist of 'Gaia' fame, also sees the need for 'sustainable retreat' but warns that its already gone so bad that 'civilisation' will have to plan to defend itself against the disasters and scarcity created by global meltdown, which he thinks will result in 'tribal' warfare. The logic of this is we'd better get ready to deny entry to flooded-out Bangladeshi refugees unless they have something useful to offer 'our' European democracies, because that will be the only hope of maintaining stability in the face of environmental collapse.

It all seems a bit gloomy. So why are social anarchists in France interested in this kind of theory now? In Britain, ecological ideas and environmental activism have been around for long time on the radical agenda and crossed over significantly into anarchist circles in the 1990s before predictions of global catastrophe really hit the mainstream (at least, wildlife TV presenter David Attenborough admitted he was only recently convinced that global warming was a real phenomenon). It is probably true to say that environmentalism has influenced anarchism less quickly in France, and it has emerged at a time when global warming and fuel crises are becoming discussed more widely. More generally, anti-globalisation sentiment in France is in part a response to threats to the domestic economy such as pressure by the World Trade Organisation to remove farming subsidies that support local production of food (WTO talks failed to reach agreement because neither US nor France want to remove there own). It is therefore no surprise that José Bové, the farmer who became a media icon over his anti-McDonalds and WTO activism, is also a supporter of Décroissance.

On the other hand, much of the British environmental movement has not yet realised the need for non-statist solutions and can be quite individualist and moralis-

tic. One important aspect of French anarchist views on Décroissance is that living 'lightly' does not have to equate to austerity and overpowering morality and libertarians "do not want to see totalitarian management of décroissance driven by new Green Khmers", a reference to overbearing communist control in Cambodia. From the "habit of a nun we could make a hell of a lot of g-strings", they say! They also make the point that although individuals taking the initiative to live a greener lifestyle is laudable e.g. buying goods that don't have to travel so far (French wine springs to mind!), this is not a solution to over-consumption and energy waste because so much of this comes directly as a result of government policies on military spending, transportation and agriculture which are all materials and energy intensive. Governments who create public campaigns to get us to save electricity and water are complete hypocrites, and the middle class desire for a more eco-friendly and ethical, but still market-led, economic system is a dead-end. The French anarchists are also fiercely anti-work - work being not only the driver for much of the wasteful consumption in our society, but also part and parcel of our class-divided society. Anarchist communists, although we are not anti-technology, are in favour of creating simpler devices and tools that do not leave power in the hands of experts. We also want to show how cities and transportation have arisen to support capitalist economies based on industry and trade, and how a future anarchist society could be so much better. These are good reasons to be against complex technological so-called solutions to global warming. It is also clear that a move away from intensive animal rearing is the only way that food can be produced sustainably, since meat-eating requires huge amounts of land, plus food and water for the animals. And we have no desire for workers to self-manage mobile phone factories if we don't need mobile phones. Taking all these ideas together, the logic of revolutionary Décroissance, if such exists, is not about a slow retreat, but about destruction of both work and economies as we know them, including industrial factories and agri-business. In this sense there really isn't anything that could be described as 'good' growth. Class struggle must be central to revolutionary Décroissance because without it, we might forget to see that we have common interests with workers and peasants in developing countries like India and China, and instead be taken in by bogus arguments about over-population or perhaps feel threatened or even morally outraged by the effects of their rapid industrialisation. Instead we need to concentrate on forcing degrowth at home, by refusal of work and attacking the basis of capitalism – ownership of land and resources, and the powers that result from this – and create solidarity with workers who are struggling for better lives abroad.

Read the AF's pamphlet on ecology and class struggle: Where there's Brass, there's Muck, available from our usual address.

swaziland

Like previous years in Swaziland, 21st January 2005 marked Youth Day, a day of protest against the absolute monarchy in Swaziland. And also like previous years, it was marked by savage police repression.

Swaziland has lived under a state of emergency since 1973. All political parties and associations are banned; arrests of opponents to the regime are frequent, as is torture. Several people have died in custody under suspicious circumstances.

On that day, petrol bombs had been thrown at court houses and the homes of members of the regime. At first, the Swazi regime accused the only revolutionary organisation in southern Africa, the Zabalaza Anarchist-Communist Federation (ZACF). The ZACF responded by recalling that they "unanimously rejected terrorism as a method of popular mass mobilization" and that a few people acting alone were not enough to change the system.

Following this, 16 members of the youth wing of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), a Swazi oppositional group, were accused of high treason and attempted murder over the petrol bomb attacks.

There is a distinct lack of evidence in this case and the regime is using the arrests to further repress opposition.

The ZACF has demanded a general amnesty of all political prisoners and stated that militants had to go beyond their habitual demands for "the total destruction of the State, and its replacement by decentralized popular assemblies of the working class, the poor and the peasantry".

Whilst the Swazi Royal Family lives in conspicuous abundance, an average Swazi family lives on less than $1 a day. Most people have no access to water and nearly 42% of the population are victims of AIDS with no preventive programme in place. There is no free primary education.

The PUDEMO called for the right to education and healthcare, access to medicines to counter the effects of AIDS, and a guaranteed right to food for all.

The PUDEMO activists are now out on bail. However, when they come to trial they may face the death penalty. Pressure has to be put on the Swazi regime for the dropping of charges. Both South Africa and Britain are active supporters of the corrupt regime.

the 'vast machine' or anarchist communism?

"Air travel was dangerous so she took a train to Paris and got on the daily charter bus to England. When the bus reached the English Channel everyone got out and wandered around the enormous ferryboat. Maya watched British tourists buy duty-free liquor, pump coins into slot machines, and stare at a comedy on the television screen. Life was normal - almost boring - when you were a citizen. They didn't seem to care or realise that they were monitored by the Vast Machine.

There were four million closed-circuit television cameras in Britain, about one camera for every fifteen people. Thorn once told her that an average person working in London would be photographed by three hundred different surveillance cameras during the day. When the cameras first appeared, the government put up posters telling everyone that there were 'SECURE BENEATH WATCHFUL EYES'. Under the shield of the new anti-terrorism laws, every industrial country was following the British example.

Maya wondered if citizens made a deliberate attempt to ignore the intrusion. Most of them truly believed that the cameras protected them from criminals and terrorists. They assumed that they were still anonymous when they walked down the street. Only a few people understood the power of the new facial-scanning programs. The moment your face was photographed by a surveillance camera, it could be transformed into a consistent size, contrast and brightness that could be matched against a driver's license or passport photograph.

The scanner programs identified individual faces, but the government could also use the cameras to detect unusual behaviour. These so-called Shadow programmes were already being used in London, Las Vegas and Chicago. The computer analyzed one-second images taken by the cameras and alerted the police if someone left a package in front of a public building or parked a car on the shoulder of a highway. Shadow noticed anyone who strolled through the city instead of trudging to work. The French had a name for these curious people- flaneurs- but as far as the Vast Machine was concerned, any pedestrian who lingered on street corners or paused at construction sites was instantly suspicious. Within a few seconds, images of these people would be highlighted in color and sent to the police." (Taken from The Traveller by John Twelve Hawks, Bantam Press, July 2005)

The above passage about a fictitious future society, taken from a 'bestseller', does not seem that far off from today's Britain. Recent articles in Organise! and in our pamphlet on ID cards have already highlighted the kinds of technology that are available and being implemented to various

Continued on page 8

Interview with a Belarusian anarchist, living in Britain since the crack-down over election protests.

How easy is it for you to organise meetings? Can you book rooms to have meetings and advertise them?

It is possible to organise meetings via closed communication channels (mostly mailing lists and personal contacts). Booking rooms is more difficult: from time to time, activists gather in each other's apartments, but regular meetings in a same location would draw attention of state enforcers: warranted and unwarranted searches, confiscation of equipment, in some cases even planting incriminating evidence such as drugs. Advertising meetings in public is quite dangerous. The last safe publicly advertised gathering happened last autumn, during the Belarusian Social Forum and the "No Culture without Subculture" festival. Since then, the state uses all legitimate means to stop publicly announced meetings from happening. The most widespread practice is to use fire department inspection as an excuse for closing down the site.

Can you be openly anarchist or against the government? Can you publish material that is critical?

No. The new criminal code introduced last year criminalises a whole range of activities - see the survey document on the web at http://belarus.indymedia.org/1713

Can you organise public protests?

Yes and no. We can organise public protests, but any protest that isn't sanctioned by the state is illegal, and state officials only sanction actions that are innocent and located at far ends of the city. Nevertheless, illegal protests are organised - exemplified by the protests that took place in March and April in Minsk.

What controls exist on people who may be questioning the system? How intrusive are the police or any other authority?

With the latest criminal law changes, the state has all the tools necessary to threaten and punish people without breaking its own laws. Even without it, police routinely fake detention protocols,

degrees. The arguments for this increased surveillance are the same - it is necessary to protect the public from terrorism. Many people have accepted this dangerous logic. Anarchists have always argued against the argument that we need to give up our freedom in order to be 'safe'. For example, Malatesta provides an eloquent denunciation back in the late 19th century in his book 'At the Café: Conversations with Anarchists':

"Gino (a worker): Is it true that you anarchists want to remove the police force? I am not their friend, and you know it. But I'm also not the friend of murderers and thieves and I would like my goods and my life to be guarded as well.

Giorgio (Malatesta): And who guards you from the guardians? Do you think that the best way to provide for one's security is by offering up one's neck to a gang of people who, with the excuse of defending us, oppress us and practice extortion, and do a thousand times more damage than the thieves and murderers?"

Events since September 11th and the advent of the 'war on terrorism' in earnest, have given us many reasons to see the truth in Malatesta's words. Just think how 'secure' the Brazilian worker felt when he was shot by the police seeking to 'protect' the public. Yet, for the most part we continue living our lives oblivious to this repressive surveillance, increased police powers and the vast quantities of information that exist about us in various data banks. On the surface, it doesn't seem to impinge on our lives. Even those active in anarchist and other social movements that challenge the current power structures, are not usually conscious of the likely surveillance that is going on. Our phones are most likely tapped, undercover officers will have been used to identify 'who's' who' and our activities will be monitored. It is only in certain circumstances, recently in the build-up to G8 protests, that individuals have overtly felt the weight of surveillance and police control of activity. Nevertheless, the protests have largely gone ahead in some form. In Scotland last year, despite certain individuals being targeted by the 'FIT team', the heavy police presence around the 'eco-camp' in Stirling, and some actions seemingly known to the police in advance, meetings, demonstrations and other actions went ahead, sometimes taking the police by surprise. Instead, the focus of the State is largely on Islamic activists. Anarchists have not shown too much concern about this, seeing Islam as an enemy of anarchism. However, we maybe should rethink our silence. Anarchists could easily become the next target. The State may choose not to see the difference between an Islamic 'training camp' and one set up by Earth First.

In Russia this year, anarchists were the target. In Russia and many other countries of the former Soviet Union, anarchists are struggling to organise under heavy surveillance and police repression. Those activists who attempted to go to St. Petersburg, as they had gone to other venues for other protests, had a very different experience. The protests were banned outright and hundreds of known activists were arrested in advance. People were stopped at the border and bureaucratic and financial impediments made practical organisation almost impossible. Yet, despite these difficulties, anarchist movements exist and are continuing to grow and develop.

There is no doubt that the tendency throughout the world is for those in power to increase their control over every aspect of our lives. Capitalism is a system that is unpredictable and impossible to control. Marx's economic predictions have proved to be only too true: that capitalism is inherently prone to lurch from crisis to crisis. As a result, those in power desperately struggle to control what they can, in order to ensure the stability and survival of the system that is the basis of their dominance. They cannot control capital itself: financial movements around the world, rising and falling prices of commodities, fluctuating demand for products. Therefore, they aim to control the people - as workers and consumers. Every aspect of society is geared to ensuring that people consume and work, according to routines and schedules. They need our lives to be predictable and our minds to be busy with seeking individual 'happiness' that is brought about through 'success', money, and entertainment. Any thoughts of the 'bigger' questions on the meaning of life are safely

writing things like "public disorder" and "attacking police officers" when no such thing took place. For example, one activist was arrested again immediately after being released from prison; two undercover officers came up to him and fell to the ground, as if he attacked them.

State authority is being propagandized in all state institutions, starting with kindergartens. Concerts of musicians known to be critical of the state are not allowed. Carrying non-state flags is illegal. During the protests in March-April, it was usual for police to subject people on the streets to searches and to confiscate innocent things such as warm clothes and food. The activist scene is also widely penetrated by police and KGB provocateurs, instilling the atmosphere of fear and distrust.

What about neo-Nazi groups? Do they threaten what people try and do?

They exist around Belarus, but luckily, the situation is not as bad as in Russia. In many towns and cities, there are strong anti-fascist movements that keep neo-Nazis in check. Still, Nazis benefit from the silent support of the state. For example, just before I left Minsk, a Nazi concert was announced and held in a concert hall of a military base a couple of blocks from my house.

How do people feel repression in everyday life?

In a lot of different, mostly subtle ways:

- The abundance of police and military on the streets, sometimes carrying Kalashnikovs
- State red-and-green flags (nicknamed "sunset over swamp") in all appropriate and inappropriate places, often accompanied by portraits of Lukashenko
- Endless stream of Stalin-era propaganda on TV and in state newspapers (and there's only one non-state newspaper left, and they only sell it under-the-counter or in some European embassies)
- Praising of state and Lukashenko in kindergartens (this one really pissed me off), not to mention schools and universities
- the general atmosphere of fear, as people who believe propaganda think Belarus is surrounded by enemies and internal traitors, and those who don't think that they'll get in trouble if they speak up
- No job safety at all, as people get fired at will (speaking Belarusian can be enough), and as new taxes and legislations bring down whole sectors of local economy

controlled and managed, for example, through organised religion.
However, all through history, many people, to varying degrees, have proved impossible to control and manage in this way. In today's world, anarchists are some of these people, refusing the legitimacy of the State and the need for authority, rejecting the work ethic, the drive for money and status and the diversion of consumerism, and ignoring the existence of borders. In the 'Traveller' the heroes and heroines resemble anarchists. They have chosen to live 'off the grid'. This is the only way they can survive as free human beings and resist the 'Vast Machine'. The novel is based on the struggle of these exceptional individuals, cut-off from the rest of society, against the Machine. Many anarchists also attempt to have as little to do with society as possible - not engaged in official 'work', living in squats or camps and travelling to different countries to help with struggles. As the State becomes even more intrusive and repressive, some individuals are forced into 'disappearing', living under assumed identities, leaving their homes and countries. Therefore, having alternative networks and ways of living that are independent of the State and capitalism are crucial to both our resistance and survival. However, we want to do more than *resist*; we want to *transform*. These alternative networks, structures and cultures will form the basis of the creation of a new society. But this is not enough. As the characters in 'The Traveller' discovered, they needed other people, ordinary people who were still part of the system, in order to mount any effective resistance. The same goes for anarchists. Creating alternative, off-the grid, micro-societies may be important for survival, for making life more bearable for some individuals, and/or for creating new ways of doing things, but the goal is to transform *all of society*. A few individuals heroically fighting back will not accomplish this. Therefore, we have to have a strategy that also involves resistance and transformation in the 'heart of the Machine', where the vast majority of people are. History has shown that although individual action is important, it is only when people in great number say 'no' or 'we want this', that change takes place. The campaign against the Poll Tax was an example of this. Individuals may have found ways of avoiding the Poll Tax but this did not bring an end to it. But when masses of people refused to pay, the government caved in. The same could happen with ID cards. It is not enough for anarchists and a few others to find ways of avoiding its imposition, we need to build a mass movement against ID cards where thousands and thousands of people are refusing to have anything to do with them. The protests against the G8 in Petersburg could not have been repressed if the small anarchist and alternative movements in Russia and Europe had been joined by thousands of ordinary Russians. We can not only turn back the tide of repression and surveillance, but create an alternative society. The descent into a Big Brother future is not inevitable. But our success depends on a two-prong strategy: the creation of autonomous networks and structures within which we can live more freely and experiment with new ways of living, and the building up of a mass movement that will cause the 'Vast Machine' to disintegrate in the face of its force and vitality.

The interview running concurrently with this article is with a comrade from Belarus, now living in England which, though of interest in its own right, illustrates many of the points made in this article. They show the constraints on political activity that make it very difficult to organise. Though in Britain anarchists do not experience such repression, we must not become complacent; the British State is moving in the direction of increased surveillance and repression of opposition movements. As mentioned above, Islamic groups are feeling the brunt of surveillance and repression. The point to be taken from this interview is that despite the repression, they not only manage to fight back, but stress the importance of having a public presence and are aware of the need to win over others to anarchism.

What do you do or can you do to resist and fight back against all of this?

First of all, we spread information: news outlets with anarchist viewpoint, propaganda of self-organisation, informational support of grass-roots initiatives, and critique of the establishment (both the state and the opposition parties). The recent creation of Indy Media (IMC) in Belarus has certainly increased the amount of activity in this area.
Somewhat related is the (sub)cultural activity, such as organization of expositions, concerts, satirical movies ("Navinki" group has grown to be very good at the latter), etc.
Now and then, anarchists start or get involved with other independent initiatives. For example, we managed to form a strong anarchist core within the Minsk Linux User Group, our example of self-organization has led many MLUG activists to form better opinion of anarchism, some of them have become anarchists themselves. The Critical Mass movement in Minsk was started by anarchists from Belarusian Anarchist Federation group. The IMC Belarus was initiated by anarchists and to this day remains strongly pro-anarchist.
Then there's also an anti-fascist movement across Belarus, which is far more successful than its counterpart in Russia. It is quite well-organised, although you can't also discount the fact that fascists in Belarus are not as dangerous as in Russia: they have less criminal background, there are many disorganised bonehead groups with no direct backing from state or church, and there is strong anti-fascist sentiment in the general public, caused both by World War II memories and the traditional Belarusian mentality of tolerance.
One area that begs for further exploration is the labour movement, which was thoroughly destroyed in the late 90s. Belarusian workers are disorganized ("official" trade unions obviously serve entirely different purposes), and there's also a divide between workers and intellectuals, with most anarchists being intellectuals and having huge difficulty (if they are at all trying) finding contact with workers. Even worse, there is another divide: between the city and the village.
This divide is illustrated by the make up of the Spring 2006 demonstrations: 99% of the participants were young intellectuals, mostly students of humanitarian and IT colleges and universities. No attempts have yet been made to get working class people involved.

1956: the hungarian revolution

Organise! remembers the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

The Soviet army advanced into Eastern Europe in 1944. If certain people believed that this would lead to liberation, they were soon to be proved wrong. Not only was capitalism not abolished but the old fascist regimes, like those in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, which had operated as willing junior partners of the Nazis, were maintained in a sense in that the old political structures were maintained. The personnel of the regimes were for the most part, kept in place. The Soviet leader Molotov remarked that above all "law and order had to be maintained to prevent the rise of anarchy"!

The new Hungarian government had at its head Bela Danolki-Miklos, a general decorated by Hitler and who had acted as go-between linking the Nazi regime and the fascist government of Admiral Horthy, who in 1919 had launched an horrendous White Terror against the first Hungarian Revolution.

Horthy, because of his Magyar nationalism, had proved to be an unsteady ally of Hitler, who had sent in a German occupying army.

Many Hungarians were stunned when Danolki-Miklos, a Nazi dignitary who still recognized Horthy as the legitimate leader of the country, was put in place at the head of a government, with the window dressing of a few socialists and Communists.

The Soviet regime had an objective of controlling the country through setting up a Hungarian Communist Party divested of any elements who still dreamed of any real form of communism. The Party gained control of the Ministry of the Interior and its secret police, the AVO. In 1948 it got control of the Ministry of Defence. It chopped up the opposition by allying with one current against another. It used torture and murder and repression. The forces of repression were a curious mixture of the old scum of the Horthy

regime and the new scum of the Communist Party.

Hungary becomes a Russian colony

Russia imposed severe reparations on Hungary which drove living standards down and led for a time to famine. Moscow demanded $300million in equipment and agricultural products. These went to Russia for the most part, the rest being sent to Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

Despite the repression of the AVO and the presence of the Red Army, the situation in Hungary became explosive. Moscow had to reduce its demands from 25% to 10% of national budget of Hungary spent on reparations.

Massive nationalizations led to an economy co-managed by the Hungarian government and the Soviet Union. Workers in nationalized industries suffered appalling conditions, based on piecework with rewards for higher productivity (Stakhanovism) with the lowest wages for the majority!

A long struggle between the working class and the new regime began in this period. Absenteeism and doing as little as possible at work were the main weapons of the working class. The regime denounced "lazy workers" and the falls in productivity and the bad quality of goods manufactured. In 1948 the Minister of Industry said: "The workers have adopted a terrorist attitude towards the directors of nationalized industries."

A law was passed forbidding workers to leave their workplace without permission.

At the same time from 1948 to 1950, the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe expelled from their ranks a large number of what they called supporters of "Titoism" (in Hungary, nearly 500,000 were expelled!)

In March 1953, Stalin died. Workers' revolts broke out in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia where a demonstration of Skoda workers and arms factory workers was savagely repressed. Two weeks later, the workers of East Berlin rose up, setting off revolts throughout East Germany viciously put down by Russian tanks.

The Soviet leadership had to adopt a new strategy. In Hungary this meant that the 'hard' leader Rakosi was demoted and the 'soft' Imre Nagy was appointed as Prime Minister. Several reforms were put through: light industries were revived, which hitherto had suffered at the expense of heavy industry which the USSR had needed, there was increased production of consumer products, individual peasants were given aid, and repression became less severe. The Kremlin hoped that this would quieten the Hungarian working class.

After Khrushchev came to power in the USSR, Nagy was dismissed and Rakosi put back in place. Most of the concessions put through in the last 20 months were taken away little by little. Pressure to increase reparations redoubled.

The Polish workers revolt

On 28th June 1956 the workers of Poznan demonstrated demanding the withdrawal of the Russians, the end of piecework and 'Bread and Freedom'. Again the revolt was brutally crushed.

In Hungary workers continued their struggles with a series of strikes. This encouraged intellectuals, artists, writers and students to put forward their demands. The Petofi Circle was founded by students in the Communist Youth organisation. This became an important centre for debate and discussion. At the same time underground pamphlets began to circulate, literary reviews appeared and semi-public meetings took place. Rakosi made an attempt to forbid these meetings but failed. He wanted a massive roundup, but the Soviets were fearful of things getting out of control and intervened to have Rakosi dismissed again. He was replaced by his right hand man, Gero.

This allowed the Writers Union to boot out all Rakosi supporters from its leadership, replacing them with dissidents and even non-Communists.

The regime tried to curry favour by exonerating Rajk, a Communist dissident executed earlier for Titoism. Two hundred thousand people turned up when Rajk's body was exhumed to be re-buried for an official funeral. Before his disgrace Rajk had been in charge of the AVO. Most of those who turned up that day came not to honour Rajk but to show their opposition to the regime.

October 1956 - the workers enter the struggle

Through local union branches workers called for the running of the factories by the workers. The National Committee of Unions turned these demands into 'union democracy' and 'worker's control'.

These new demands added a revolutionary content to the agitation which up to then had been one of protest. The Petofi Circle took up the demands of the workers and turned them into a narrow demand to be made on the government. Learning that the old Polish leadership had had to resign, despite the support of Moscow, the intellectuals thought that their moment had come. The Petofi Circle called for a demonstration of solidarity with their "Polish brothers" for 23rd October. The government banned the protest but then backed down when it learnt that people were massing throughout Budapest. Fifty thousand gathered to hear a resolution from the Writers' Union. This called for national independence on socialist principles, equality of relations with the USSR and a revision of the economic agreements, direction of the factories by the workers and technicians, the departure of Rakosi and for a new government with electoral freedom.

The demonstration was due to end but many taking part decided to march on Parliament. A hundred thousand gathered. It was decided to go to the main radio station so that the demands could be broadcast. On the way there, a huge statue of Stalin was dragged off its plinth and smashed.

Thousands more joined the march, including many workers. At the radio station, AVO thugs hidden in the building fired on the crowd, killing many. The crowd continued to advance, overwhelmed the police outside and took their arms to fire at the building.

Workers returned to arms factories where they worked and loaded lorries with arms which were taken to the radio station.

The panicking Communist Party leaders put the 'soft' Nagy back as Premier. But it was under his leadership that the government called on the Red Army to help "restore order".

"It was the workers who....saved the struggle from complete collapse. They saw the Nagy issue as largely irrelevant. In the society they were glimpsing through the dust and smoke of the battle in the streets, there would be no Prime Minister, politicians, and no officials or bosses ordering them about," says Andy Anderson, author of Hungary 1956.

"The young workers led the way and everyone followed them," - 21 year old worker at United Electric factory in a Budapest suburb.

Workers and students set up a revolutionary council. The battle continued around the radio station. Nagy called for the laying down of arms and promised widespread democratisation. This failed to deter many people. The revolutionary Council of Workers and Students called for a general strike.

Tanks come in

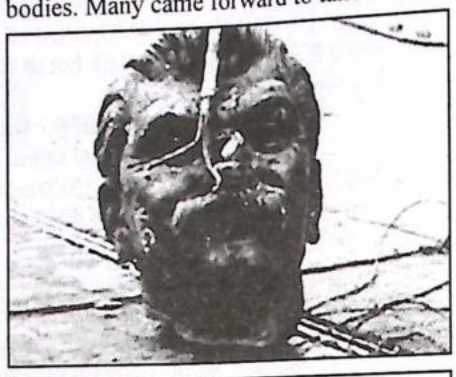
Russian tanks moved in and many barricades were built against them. Fighting went on for three days in Budapest with workers and students using molotovs, arms they had captured and even a small field gun with which they bombarded the tanks.

Meanwhile the revolution was spreading.

At Magyarovar the AVO fired on a crowd killing over a hundred people. Armed workers and students from nearby Gyor arrived. The AVO headquarters was captured, and the surviving AVO thugs were beaten to death or lynched.
The general strike spread through Budapest and out into the main industrial towns. Revolutionary committees and councils were set up all over Hungary. Councils were formed in the mines, the steel mills, the power stations. Many issued programmes. Their essential demands were revolutionary in that they shook the foundations of the bureaucracy and were almost certain to lead from there to the creation of real communism.
Peasants and farm workers organised food deliveries to the urban workers and drove out the State farm collective managers. In some areas land was redistributed, in other the collectives continued under their control.
Soon Budapest prison was captured and all the political prisoners were released. When revelations came of the terrible conditions, torture and beatings, almost every AVO man captured was killed by the crowds.
Nagy now promised the disbanding of the AVO, and the Red Army withdrew from Budapest. However, this was merely to regroup. Nagy was warned by the councils that unless the Red Army withdrew completely, they would force them to.
The Nagy government assured the people that the Russians would not attack again. But soon Pal Maleter and Kovacs, who had been leading lights in the Budapest fighting, were arrested during negotiations with the Red Army. The Red Army opened fire on all the major cities on November 4th. MIG fighters strafed the population. The working class bore the brunt of the fighting that followed. Many Russian tanks were destroyed.
The AVO came out of the holes in which they had been hiding and began to hang insurgents in groups on the bridges over the Danube in Budapest. Many of those hanged were workers.

The armed resistance ends

By November 14th, armed resistance on a large scale had ended. Although many began to return to work, the strike continued in most industries.
The new government under Janos Kadar started to arrest members of the councils. But the councils continued to consolidate their power and Kadar was forced to hold talks with them.
He began to use other means to destroy the councils. He started issuing ration cards, but only to those who returned to work, and used the Red Army to stop food deliveries to the towns by peasants. Nagy, seen as too liberal, was arrested. Later he and Maleter and others were executed in Moscow.
Kadar began arresting more workers' delegates, as well as delegates of student bodies. Many came forward to take their place. When the State realized this, they went in for wholesale arrests of workers. Mass demonstrations continued, and workers fought the AVO and the army when they came to arrest their delegates. Many were gunned down by the AVO. The arrests and executions continued through 1957. It was announced that the workers councils would be replaced by works councils, controlled by trade union bureaucrats, completely subservient to the State. And finally it was announced that any remaining councils were to be abolished.



The West

It comes as no surprise that the Hungarian working class received no support, no arms, no medical supplies from the Western powers. What they fought for was as much opposed to capitalist democracy as it was to the state capitalism of the Soviet Union.
As for the Western trade unions, they did nothing. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions rejected an appeal from the workers councils for an international boycott. Contrast this with the action of Liverpool and Hull dockers who refused to touch cargoes on Soviet ships.
The Hungarian Revolution helped dispel the clouds of mystification around the USSR and its satellites. It reaffirmed the notion of unrelenting struggle by the working class against all bosses and masters, no matter how they attempt to disguise themselves as the workers' representatives.
It lights the way to a new society for which so many working people have given their lives.
The best way to honour the Hungarian Revolution is to continue the struggle for human emancipation and the coming of a new society based on equality and social justice.

The Anarchist Federation, formerly Anarchist Communist Federation, has now been going 20 years. We have written an open letter to enlist responses from people who we've worked with over the last decade and other people who we know, including Organise! readers. Get the knives (or fireworks) out!

open letter for the anarchist federation's 20th year

The Anarchist Federation is marking its 20th year with an article in Organise! magazine looking at the last decade and we'd like to enlist the help of groups and individuals in and around the anarchist movement to make this an interactive piece!

A lot has happened within the anarchist movement in Britain in the last 10 years; the dissolving and re-emergence of Class War Federation, the end of Subversion and launch of IWW UK. We changed our name from Anarchist Communist Federation, membership of the new AF has grown, and anarchism in general has made a strong mark in the environmental and wider anti-capitalist movements.

Amongst the anarchist movement's publications, Organise!, Direct Action and Black Flag continue to come out in magazine format, whilst Freedom has been revamped back to a fortnightly. The anarchist-influenced IWW is growing in numbers and offer a new magazine Bread & Roses. Anarchist publishers like AK Press, Freedom and KSL are producing excellent new written material. In 1998 the AF launched its monthly agitational bulletin Resistance, and our groups and individuals produce several local bulletins. We maintain a web-site and provide all our publications online for free.

In Britain (and also Ireland), the AF continues its participation in both community and workplace struggles. We worked in Groundswell (along with local groups like Haringay Solidarity) against the Job Seekers Allowance from 1996, and in 2006 continue to fight against repression within the Defy-ID network that is opposing "identity cards and the database state". We have worked to oppose closures of community facilities like swimming pools and local post offices. Some members work within Antifa against fascist organising, whilst others continue to support anarchist prisoners at home and abroad. We were also instrumental in setting up the Anarchist Youth Network. We struggle in our own workplaces as we extend solidarity to those in others. Amongst many workplace struggles we supported are the Liverpool Dockers and Gate Gourmet workers, and we are stepping up our organising with other comrades around the changes in schools and further/higher education.

The AF has continued to participate in the events of the anarchist and the wider anti-capitalist movement; from anarchist Maydays and bookfairs to film fairs; at RTS and Earth First! gatherings to those against the G8 (and earlier events like J18 and N30). Some of us are involved with the growing number of Social Centres and have supported the Rossport Solidarity Camp.

We demonstrated and organised against the hideous wars escalated or initiated by our politicians and armed forces in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. Whatever the Left said at the time, its past decade in power has shown New Labour to be at least as bloodthirsty and repressive and pro-business as the Tories were under Thatcher.

The AF has built up its international presence through joining the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF-IFA) and in its current position as secretariat. Looking west we encouraged the formation of NEFAC in the USA. Looking east we have strengthened links with comrades in the former soviet bloc as they adjust to capitalist realities inside (and outside) the borders of the expanded European Union.

Over the last decade, we have worked with comrades and friends to build organisational capabilities that we hope will advance the anarchist communist project.We'd like to do it much more, and better, in the future. If we missed you or your group out from the above please note this short appeal was not intended to include everyone we'd like to hear from!

The three questions...

Q1. What are the best things the A(C)F has done and/or written (in Organise! or elsewhere) since 1996?

Q2. What else could we have done in the last decade that we didn't, or, did we do (or write) something we shouldn't have?

Q3. What should the AF prioritise in the next decade?

Additional comments are welcome.

The address for written replies is:
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Back issues of Organise! are online via www.afed.org.uk

Thanks,
The Anarchist Federation

organise! magazine

- the second decade

In 1996, in the 10th anniversary edition of Organise! (no.42), we printed our first retrospective article 'Organise! Onwards' saying: "Organise! has occupied a unique position amongst the many anarchist papers which have arisen in Britain by its consistent format and level of analysis. It has always been intended to sit between the agitational 'in your face' rag and the heavier theoretical journal. It is aimed at the reader who doesn't need to be convinced how bad our life is under capitalism and the state, who is looking for more information and a closer view of the class struggle." We have tried to remain true to this aim, although with a few significant changes. One change has resulted from our aim to increase the participation in Organise! by soliciting views from outside the AF, using interviews and by the commissioning of articles by comrades who are close to us politically, especially from other countries. Secondly, at the end of 1998, we launched our monthly bulletin Resistance and since then have published Organise! less often but with more pages, accompanied by a shift towards more in-depth analysis and less immediate news reporting. If this has worked, it has partly been due to longer-term themes that have emerged during the last decade: continuous war-mongering by the Western states, massive uprisings in Latin America, the ongoing consequences of European expansion, welfare and public sector attacks and fightback by workers, growth of a wider anti-capitalist movement, and activism against environmental destruction. We will examine these themes in the following paragraphs with reference to back issues of Organise!

Three Strikes and You're Out!

If you're on the dole at the moment or receiving any of the welfare benefits that are still remaining in Britain, you could be forgiven for thinking you have been forgotten about. Not so in Organise! where we have devoted many pages of news and analysis to work and unemployment issues. In 1997 the Conservative's Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and workfare scheme Project Work became part of Labour's New Deal. Since before JSA started in 1996, Organise! was reporting on the likely effects of the New Deal and clearly saw that a change in government would mean little difference in the attack on benefits. In addition a controversial area for anarchists was the role of dole-office workers who were suffering from a pay-squeeze themselves but were on the front-line of imposing the benefits regime changes on claimants. The use of 'Job Club' (forcing you to apply for shit jobs every week at the threat of getting benefits cut) and the various types of compulsory work-for-dole schemes in the New Deal meant that harassment of claimants was on the increase. Benefits workers would have to fight for claimants as well as themselves and voluntary organisations would need to be challenged about their contracts with the Job Centre to provide placement for claimants in the guise of 'voluntary' work. As part of this fightback, members of the AF participated in the Groundswell anti-JSA network. In Organise! we analysed and supported the 'Three Strikes' idea initiated by claimants' groups that was designed to confront individual 'over-zealous' dole-office employees. See issues 42 to 50 for coverage of the full story from 1996 onwards. Attacks on the unemployed from the New Deal (which followed job cuts in many 'traditional' industries) have now given way to a widespread attack on public sector workers through creeping privatisation of health and education services, introduction of performance-related-pay schemes, and a pensions 'crisis' that is being blamed on longer-living workers but in reality has much more to do with the outrageous market speculations of pension fund managers. The gap between rich and poor is widening as the middle classes benefit from their ability to borrow huge sums by remortgaging or securing loans on their houses, that has resulted from national expansion of the southern property boom. In addition, the opening up of individual shareholding under the Tories has meant that the middle class is also benefiting from the profits of huge 'investment' (read exploitation of workers) of the UK into China, for example. Organise! has endeavoured to expose the other side of this money machine in articles such as 'New China, New Blood' (issue 65). Exploitation in Britain will also continue, and this is likely to fall sharply on migrant workers and those on incapacity benefits who are the next targets of the New Deal. Britain is awash with casual and 'flexible' working (covered in Organise! 64). Younger people continue to suffer from no longer being allowed to get unemployment money if aged 16 or 17 and from the shift from student grants to loans and fees, forcing them to do low-paid jobs. So as well as supporting the casualities of job cuts and those still in work who are fighting for their livelihoods, it will surely become necessary to challenge once again the role of some public sector workers, including dole-office staff and Home Office civil servants, who are implementing government attacks on the marginalised sections of our class.

Kicked in the Balkans

In issue 45 (Spring 1997) we began to analyse the continuing break up of the former Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the Bosnian war. We looked at the pro-democracy movement Zajedno that was attempting to bring down Milosevic's government and the continued extreme nationalism in Croatia. At the same time, post-Cold War imposition of market economies was having devastating effects on the living conditions of working class people in Bulgaria and Albania, some losing everything to hyper-inflation, others to pyramid selling schemes. Now that the workers had been nicely softened up for full-scale market 'reforms', the old Communist Parties were no longer needed. We predicted that pro-democracy mobilisations in Bulgaria and Serbia would mean no more than a removal of old style Stalinists from office and their replacement by fully fledged disciples of the market. In Serbia's case, for the West at least, it wasn't soon enough. Milosevic's nationalist adventure in Kosovo/Kosova was all the excuse needed for NATO armed forces to come in aid of what was portrayed as a 'humanitarian' intervention, but was in reality about a strategic speed-up of reorganisation in the region. Unfortunately, many groups on the Left and even some anarchists fell for it and ended up siding with Albanian nationalism and NATO

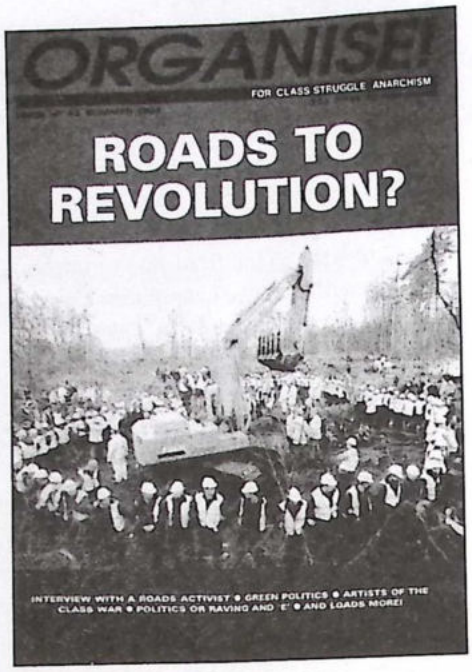
bombings rather than maintaining a 'No War but the Class War' stance. We are now reaping the reward of unfettered military interventions which are justified either by humanitarian intent or anti-terrorism. Confusion over Kosovo/a as something other than 'business as usual' for militarised states is perhaps one reason why the Left has been so ineffective in fighting against the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and the US initiated 'war on terror' that is now being used to justify all manner of bloody offensives whether by Israel in Gaza and Lebanon, or by Russia on its borders.

International Connections

We continue to adjust to the expansion of the European bloc from the Baltic and East and the negative effects of the rules governing monetary union that some EU member states have entered into. Rules to keep public spending down have meant that States have tried again and again to impose austerity measures but there has been continued resistance, notably in France. We have attempted to get first hand accounts from anarchists in those countries by means of interviews, by translating articles, and by asking for those comrades to write articles for us. We have also become much closer to our comrades in Eastern Europe, notably in Belarus and the Czech Republic. Northern Ireland continues to simmer since deals were made to bring Sinn Fein into government and we have continued to analyse the situation there, in conjunction with our comrades in 'Organise! Ireland'. Across the Atlantic, uprisings in Latin America have suffered from lack of reporting from a libertarian perspective, with much of the Left being unable to say anything that is not a simplistic support of leftist governments against US imperialism. We have published reports by and about anarchist groups and individuals in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela. In recent issues we have also attempted to make up for a paucity of reporting from Australia and Africa. Please expect more in the future.

Identity Crisis

We have experienced an increasingly authoritarian Labour government since its election in 1997, which has brought in wave after wave of new repressive laws, culminating with the ID Cards Act of March this year. Articles about identity schemes in Organise! have concentrated on understanding Labour's motivations and the strategies to oppose it. We maintain that ID databases are to do with economic control



of the working class and that scare stories about crime and terrorism are merely bogus justifications, worse still it has encouraged anti-immigrant attitudes. Ex-Home Secretary David Blunkett's idea of an 'entitlement card' is just that – a way for the state to manage how taxes and welfare monies are spent. It is all the more scary that this power is going to be enabled by a raft of private companies who will run information databases and set-up biometric 'interrogation centres' on the government's behalf. We are also at pains to help remember that the Tories tried to introduce ID in the mid-1990s, and to realise that the ID Cards Act is just one part of State legislation that goes back at least to the Criminal Justice Act that anarchists were fighting before, and is not just the initiative of a particular party. In Britain, the AF has been supportive of resurrecting Defy-ID, a network of local groups that was begun several years ago but has suffered from a loss of enthusiasm; perhaps inevitable given the time taken for the legislation to go through. Further to this, the European paranoia about border control will greatly influence the introduction rate of biometric passports and identity schemes, and some kind of international coordination is badly needed.

Green Anarchy?

Recognition of the threat of environmental catastrophe from industrial growth and its unsustainable fuels and infrastructures has become more widespread amongst liberals. The anarchist movement responded much earlier and has been involved in many environmental actions as well as in more generalised anti-capitalist initiatives from J18 to the Scotland G8 which have been reported on and analysed in depth within the pages of Organise! over the last decade. In the aftermath of the dissolving of Class War Federation in 1997 much soul-searching went on and a conference in Bradford in 1998 was initiated by some of the ex-CWF comrades who were inviting others to look at the way forward for anarchism in Britain (see Organise! 47 and 49). Members of the Anarchist Communist Federation - as we were then known (see Organise! 52 for an explanation of the name change) - agreed to take part in organising the conference which succeeded in attracting 250 people. By far the biggest surprise of the event was the engagement of environmental activists, including people involved with Earth First!, who were calling themselves anarchists for the first time. A true meeting of anti-capitalist minds was perhaps helped by the ACF having published Organise! articles taking a positive stance towards environmental activism such as land occupations and road protests. We analysed green issues from an anarchist communist perspective that have since been collected in our pamphlet 'Ecology and Class: where there's brass, there's muck'. On the other hand we were critical of the potential for elitism in direct action groups if they are not connected to a wider class struggle, and of deep ecology or primitivist perspectives - whilst recognising that the destructive economic growth inherent in capitalism is partly fuelled by demands for technologies, and that these technologies are not neutral with respect to the power relationships we are forced to accept under the present system.

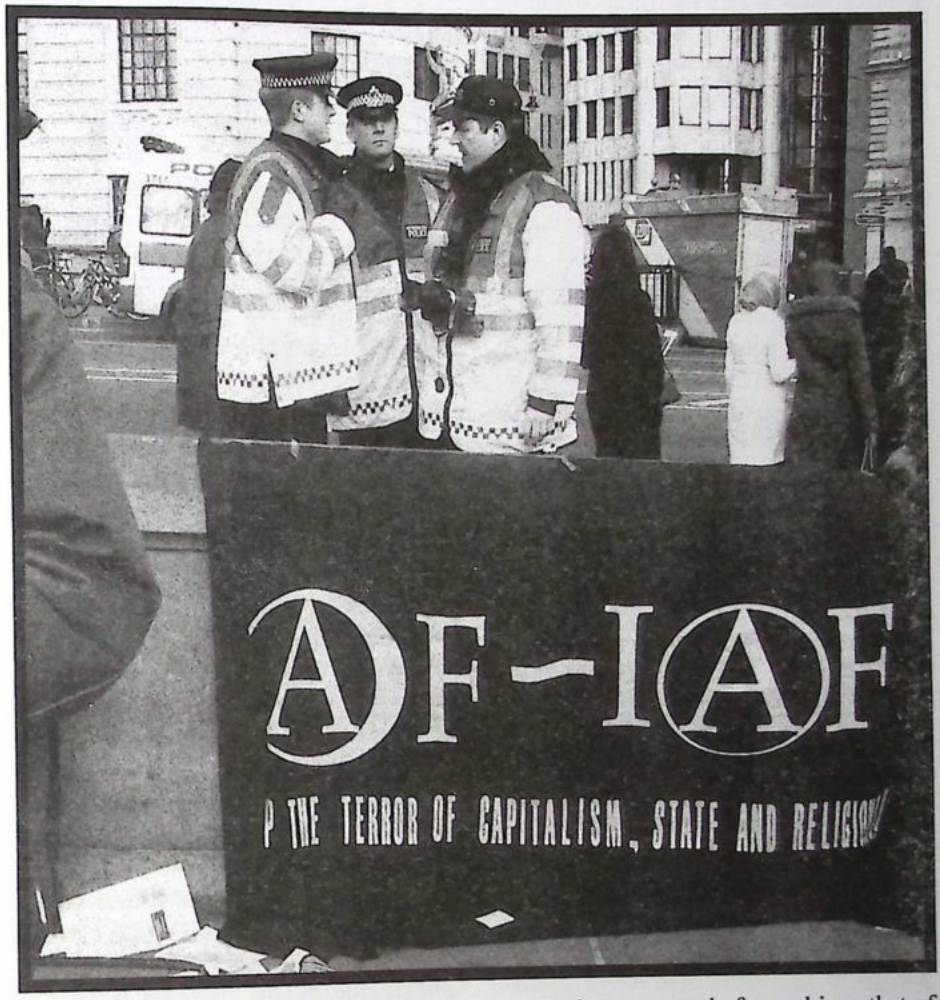
Myths, Legends & Portraits

After we continued our 'Aspects of Anarchism' series to its conclusion (now an AF pamphlet) we introduced two new ones. Starting at issue 46 the 'Myths and Legends' short series took the hatchet to popular icons such as Che Guevara, Gandhi, Haile Selassie and Evita. Following this we set things straight by recounting the lives of lesser known anarchists and libertarian socialists in the ongoing series 'Revolutionary Portraits', which are complemented by the importance given in Organise! to obituaries of comrades who have left us more recently. Articles from these series and obituaries have since been reproduced as part of the Libcom.org online library. In addition to the regular series we have also published several serial articles, notably 'In the Tradition' which charted the political influences of the Anarchist Federation over five issues, and 'The Union

the politics of the anarchist federation: a tribute

By Brian Morris

In an important academic study of contemporary anarchism Karen Goaman (2002) focussed exclusively on avant–garde individualists and anarcho-primitivists. She implied, quite misleadingly, that these "currents" represented contemporary anarchism, and were, moreover, the only ones that engaged in radical "activism". What was interesting about her study was that she emphasized the importance of anarchist periodicals, for they created a sense of community, and, by drawing on past traditions, re-kindled and kept alive an alternative vision of social life. Unfortunately, by focussing exclusively on anarcho-primitivism and the avant-garde (falsely equated with anarchism) Goaman neglected to mention those anarchist groups focussed around such important periodicals as "Direct Action", "Black Flag", "Class War", "Red and Black Revolution", "Rebel Worker" and "Freedom". Even more striking, given her emphasis on the Situationists and the avant-garde (the focus of her thesis) she completely fails to mention the Anarchist Federation. Yet over the last two decades the Anarchist (Communist) Federation has been actively engaged in contemporary struggles – whether relating to struggles around the workplace or community, environmental issues or the anti-capitalist movement- as well as regularly producing a splendid anarchist magazine Organise! and several important pamphlets.



As the Anarchist Federation is this year celebrating its 20th anniversary it might be useful here to offer my own reflections on this periodical, appropriately titled with the active verb "Organise!" – for revolutionary anarchism.

Although the magazine openly advocates a specific form or strand of anarchism, that of anarchist communism and revolutionary class struggle, what I think is quite refreshing about Organise! is that it has always been free of sectarian angst and vituperation. Thus while engaging in constructive

Continued from page 16

makes us Strong?' - an in-depth look at anarcho-syndicalism and its approach to workplace struggle, in three parts. All this is in addition to our continued coverage in Organise! of anarchist history and culture in the form of feature articles and reviews of new books and pamphlets, and support of anarchist prisoners through regular articles, printing of their letters and by sending out free copies.

The Future

The future of anarchist printed magazines in Britain is uncertain. Not for the first time have we heard that an issue of Black Flag might be the last, or that there are too many magazines saying similar things, whilst internet media seems to be more and more attractive not least in terms of cost, and the number of radical bookshops have been decimated. True enough, more people will read Organise! articles on our website or through one of the online newswires like A-infos, but the AF believes there is still a need for a printed magazine such as Organise! The growth of the social centres phenomenon means there are once again places you can go and find anarchist literature in printed form. Prison copies are read and passed around. If you can help with cash Organise! is always in need of contributions to its press fund. No amount is too small. But more importantly, keep reading Organise! and when you have, write us letter and tell us what you think. Thanks for your support!

debates and critiques of other forms of anarchism, it has been singularly free of the personal invective and abuse that mars other anarchist periodicals, especially in the United States. Aiming not only to develop anarchist ideas, but to offer a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and debates, what is also significant about Organise! is the truly broad coverage that it has always offered to its readership. Thus over the last decade or so Organise! has offered critical reflections on many different issues and struggles, both at a local level and in relation to the British state. It has then kept us informed about worker's struggles in Britain, and has offered enlightening reflections on such issues as the Criminal Justice Bill, advertising – "the poetry of capitalism", on racism in Tower Hamlets, and on the relation of squatters and travellers to the economic crisis

But what has always appealed to me about the magazine is that, within its twenty or so pages, it has invariably carried one or more articles on resistance movements or class struggles in other parts of the world. Organise! has therefore always offered its readers an internationalist perspective, in reporting on the world-wide impact of global capitalism. Thus there have been informative articles on, for example, worker's struggles in Japan, the resistance of native peoples in the Philippines and elsewhere to the intrusion of mining corporations, the terror in East Timor, class war in Argentina, and on the many issues relating to the politics of such countries as Cuba, China, Somali, Mexico and South Africa.

Yet although Organise! has been centrally concerned with class struggles at home and abroad, it has never neglected other important fields of struggle, particularly those relating to gender, the environment, and wider cultural issues. Reading some anarchist texts and periodicals one might be forgiven for assuming that the anarchist movement only involves men, either academics or macho types. What then has been important about Organise! is that it has always been involved in gender issues. It has often focussed on women anarchists like Ito Noe, or on issues, such as abortion, that specifically concern women. Informative articles on anarchism and sex, on women and the Spanish revolution, and on pornography and the sex industry have expressed this interest in gender issues.

With regard to ecology Organise! has always taken a balanced approach. On the one hand we have anarchist periodicals like "Anarchy" and "Green Anarchist" which embrace primitivism with a fundamentalist ardour, and completely ignore class struggles, workers and urban problems, while on the other hand many anarchist journals and newspapers have tended to treat ecology as of marginal interest. In contrast Organise! has always treated the ecological crisis and environmental issues as important topics, while at the same time supporting class struggles. Social justice and defending the environment are, for the Anarchist Federation, intrinsically linked. Thus Organise! has always supported environmental campaigns, whether in relation to Twyford Down or in supporting the London Green Peace activists against the McDonald corporation. Equally important is that over the past decade it has provided useful critiques of primitivism and deep ecology as well as illuminating discussions of such issues as the politics of water, deforestation, nature conservation (anti-people or anti-capitalism?), public transport and land ownership. The pamphlet "Ecology and Class: Where there's Brass, there's Muck" draws together many of these earlier articles, and gives a very useful introduction to ecological issues, viewed from an anarchist communist perspective. The pamphlet is informative, well-researched and lucid, and covers a wide range of topics from biotechnology and global warming to primitivism and the anti-roads movement.

Equally important, though having a central focus on class struggles, and critical of the kind of scholasticism that is all too common in Academia, articles in Organise! often deal specifically with theoretical debates and wider cultural issues. Thus over the decade there have been articles on Keynesian economics, intellectual property rights, the politics of the Socialist Worker's Party, Malcolm X and Black nationalism, mutual aid and evolution, cultural identity, moral panics and children and god and religion.

In retrospect, it is of interest to read the early articles on Tony Blair and Saddam Hussein. These show a good deal of prescience. The article on Blair entitled "Labour Pains" (1995) reflects on Blair's pamphlet on "Socialism" (no less), indicating how wishy-washy it is, and how Blair's politics are akin to those of Thatcher. How true!

Finally, there are the aspects of the magazine Organise! that have always appealed to me – the political cartoons, the support for anarchist prisoners, the obituaries and biographical vignettes of revolutionary anarchists, some known, some unknown, and the book reviews. Though often critical, such reviews express a generous spirit. There is also, usually, an engaging letters page.

Unlike some pretentious anarcho-primitivists the Anarchist Federation has always sought to critically develop anarchist communist ideas. So it has never saw the need to ridicule and dismiss the ideas of an earlier generation of anarchists as "obsolete". It has therefore drawn insightfully on the life and work of such social anarchists as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Makhno and Durruti.

Asked to respond to what the Anarchist Federation has done over the past decade or so, especially in relation to its magazine, one can only say that Organise! has been a beacon of light in a troubled world. Long may it prosper.

Reference
Karen Goaman, The Old World is Behind You: The Situationists and beyond in contemporary anarchist currents. Ph.D.Thesis University of London 2002

the general strike: the great betrayal?

The Public Sector strike in March of this year saw one million workers on strike in what was the largest industrial disruption since the General Strike of 1926, eighty years previously. The strike against changes in the Local Government Pension Scheme was an example of the Trade Unions responding to the anger of their membership with a demoralising one day action. Following the strike, the unions declared all action postponed pending talks – all momentum was deliberately lost.

So, was the story any different in 1926? Was the General Strike an expression of working class self-determination? Or was it a revolutionary strike aimed at overthrowing the ruling class?

The way that the General Strike, or should that be *The* General Strike as it is the only one to have taken place in Britain, is remembered is often with a strong romanticism and the notion of terrible betrayal by union leaders.

What was the background to the strike and how did the union leaders manage to get away with such a 'betrayal'?

'Black Friday', April 1921

In 1921, the Government announced a wage cut for miners. This attack brought a militant response from large sections of the working class and the potential for a mass strike movement in defence of wages. The 'Triple Alliance' of miners, railway workers and other transport workers' unions frightened the state. The Russian Revolution was only four years old and a revolutionary wave of working class struggle continued throughout Europe. The government sent troops into the coalfields and geared up for a confrontation. The miners were left to fight alone when the 'Triple Alliance' collapsed on what became known as 'Black Friday'. Driven back to work after three months, the miners were given wage cuts of between 10% and 40%. This defeat left the miners feeling both betrayed and isolated. The overall level of working class confidence and combativity was also affected and trade union membership fell dramatically. It was not until the latter part of 1924 that the class struggle appeared once more on the rise.

'Red Friday', July 1925

In 1925 the government threatened another vicious reduction in miners' wages, along with a lengthening of the working day. There had been a devaluation of the pound to 90% of its pre-war value and the British bosses were determined that the working class would shoulder the burden of maintaining the country's place in the world economy. Faced with this threat the Trades Union Congress re-convened the 'Triple Alliance', now more generally known as the 'Cripple Alliance' and the Transport and Railwaymens' unions again pledged to stand with the miners if the governments' threat was carried out. On this occasion the government decided to back down and the decision was hailed as a victory for the workers, a 'Red Friday' to avenge the Black one four years earlier. But why did the government decide to hold back?

The retreat was essentially tactical. The strategists of the ruling class were not confident that the cuts could be successfully imposed at this point and wished to postpone the confrontation. In his report on the industrial situation to the King, Maurice Hankey, Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet said: "The majority of the Cabinet regard the present moment as badly chosen for the fight, though the conditions would be more favourable nine months hence."

A nine month subsidy was given to the mining industry and a Commission (the Samuel Commission to investigate the problems of the industry was set up as a smokecreen. The government began to oversee the stockpiling of coal and made preparations for a massive class confrontation. Plans were drawn up for the temporary 'nationalisation' of the road haulage industry, for the maintenance of 'order' and recruitment of volunteer strike-breakers. This latter would be handled by the Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies, a right-wing 'private' organisation led by elements in the ruling class, established for just such an occasion.

That the ruling class really weren't sure that the 'Triple Alliance' would perform another 'Black Friday' turn for them is evident. Whilst the government didn't take the revolutionary rhetoric that emanated from the September 1925 TUC Congress on face value, they were still worried that the momentum for action might carry the trade unions further than their leadership might have wanted. They lacked confidence in the Trade Unions ability to control their membership.

The state was also unsure about the influence of the Communist Party, both its strength amongst workers and its intention. On October 14th 1925 the Home Secretary ordered the arrest of 11 leaders of the party

who were subsequently imprisoned for periods of between six and 12 months on charges of seditious libel and incitement to mutiny. The majority were, however, released before the General Strike in May 1926.

The Samuel Commission came up with its 'impartial' findings in early 1926. It found that there had indeed been mismanagement of the British coalfields but wage cuts and increased hours were still inevitable in order to make the industry competitive in the world market. So, a full year in which the government was able to prepare for confrontation was lost for the workers. Anger reached a boiling point with the results of the commission and the ending of the subsidy. The TUC was forced to call a general strike, unsure of its ability to control it but afraid that by not putting itself at its head it would be by-passed. When J.R. Cleynes (of the General and Municipal workers union) said that "I am not in fear of the capitalist class. The only class I fear is our own," he was being remarkably honest for a union leader! Up to the last minute, the leadership of the TUC attempted to lash-up a deal with the government and made plain their hope that a general strike would be averted. Meanwhile, the British press was busy creating hysteria about the impending class warfare. When printers at the Daily Mail, as right-wing a rag then as now, went on unofficial strike when asked to publish another anti-union article, the TUC repudiated the action.

On the 4th May 1926 the size and breadth of the General Strike took everyone by surprise, not least the TUC, who had organised very little in preparation for the action. The overwhelming organisational lead was taken at a local level, particularly through Trades Union Councils, local strike committees and quickly organised 'Councils of Action' which involved strikers and their supporters. In some areas, embryonic workers' militias formed and violent clashes occurred throughout the country, despite the best attempts of the TUC to maintain a blissful calm. 'Unorganised' workers in some areas were amongst the first to strike and everywhere joined their unionised comrades. Despite efforts by strike-breaking students the country was coming to a standstill and in many areas little or nothing moved without the agreement of the strikers. The state for its part, geared up for an escalation, aware of the possibility that things might get 'out of hand'. Battleships were anchored in the Clyde, the Mersey and elsewhere whilst the army and navy were put on standby, all leave being cancelled.

Understandably the trade union leaderships were extremely anxious and used every opportunity to display their moderation and horror at the way they were being treated by the government. In response to the publication of the British Gazette, the anti-strike bulletin of the government, the TUC published the British Worker. This daily bulletin continually emphasised that the strike was an industrial dispute and nothing more, whilst encouraging local strike committees to organise sports activities and 'entertainments'. The famous football matches between strikers and the police were a product of such suggestions. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin described the general strike as "[a] challenge to parliament and the road to anarchy and ruin".

The Betrayal?

But whilst the TUC issued demands that the workers "stand firm", they pointedly refused to call out power and electricity supply workers and waited until a week into the strike before calling out maritime workers. By this time the TUC had already entered into secret negotiations to end the strike. None of their demands were met. But on May 12th, the General Council of the TUC called off the General Strike. The news, relayed through the British Worker, came as a shock to most strikers and on 13th May there were more workers out on strike than ever before. The workers were deliberately not told that the mineworkers union had opposed the ending of the strike and imagined that a victory of some description had been won. Confusion reigned and as news of the capitulation filtered through there was a general sense of bitterness and dockworkers, engineers, railway workers and others continued the strike unofficially. Eventually though, the

charles h. kerr – radical publishers is 120 years old

2006 sees the 120th anniversary of the birth of the radical publishers Charles H. Kerr - making it the oldest 'publishers of anti-establishment literature' around today. Founded in Chicago 1886 to print radical Unitarian literature, CHK soon developed towards publishing anarchist and socialist material under the radicalising influence of the Haymarket fit-up, and has been publishing continuously ever since. One of the very first successes that the company had was in fact key in the campaign to pardon the surviving anarchists, Lester C. Hurrard's The Coming Climax (!) being particularly influential in Governor Atgeld's decision to issue a pardon in 1893.

The mainstay of the early catalogue tended to be what are today known as 'Marxist classics' but which in their time were important popularises of progressive ideas amongst the working class. A torrent of books and pamphlets flooded from the CHK press in the period up to 1920 covering industrial unionism, working class history, atheism, sex education, anthropology, economics (Mary E. Marcy's classic of the genre Shop Talks on Economics that sold over two million copies!) and the first ever complete English language edition of the three volumes of Capital.

Alongside this CHK also published the highly sophisticated monthly theoretical journal International Socialist Review (ISR) which was associated with the extreme left of the Socialist Party and the IWW. Until it was forced to close by repression following it's opposition to the US's entry into WW1 in 1918 ISR was probably the foremost English language journal in the world - that such a journal also managed to reach a circulation of 45,000 under the very difficult conditions for radical organising in the first few decades of the 20th century in the US attests to its very high standards married to a wide accessibility.

The ISR was characterised by the quality of its contributors and the originality of their articles, which in the main came from the left wing of the Second International - of those elements that fought hardest, longest and earliest against the Internationals degeneration into reformism and social patriotism - writers such as Anton Pannekoek, Herman Gorter, Rosa Luxemburg and those who represented the new militant syndicalism that was fighting against the same damaging trends in the union movement - Joe Hill, Big Bill Haywood, Emile Pouget, James Connolly. Others who were also introduced to the English speaking world through ISR included Lenin, Kollantai and Trotsky. Cartoons were carried

momentum was lost and the workers drifted back to work. The abandoned miners continued their strike officially but were isolated, slowly ground down and defeated.

The revolutionaries

What was the role of would-be revolutionary organisations within the working class during The General Strike?

The largest organisation claiming to be revolutionary at this time was the Communist Party of Great Britain. Since 1924 the party had been attempting to build a rank and file movement in the Trade Unions. This became known as the National Minority Movement and it attracted hundreds of thousands of workers, the majority of whom were not party members. Initially this movement looked like a semi-syndicalist movement but in August 1925 its direction was adjusted by the leadership. At this time the Communist International was pursuing a policy of fawning support for the 'left' leaders of Trade Unions. This was part of a general accommodation to international capitalism and suited Russian foreign policy. The Communist Party, rather than attempt to build up any movement independent of this left leadership emphasised the need for the bureaucrats to have ever more control, urging the workers to "follow the TUC and insist on the formation of the Workers' Alliance under the supreme authority of the General Council". During the General Strike itself Communist Party members threw themselves into building the local Councils of Action and strike committees. The party grew rapidly during the strike. At no time, however, did the Communist Party attempt to prepare the workers for a 'sell-out' by the TUC leadership by building independent organisation or even the nucleus of autonomous struggle. Whilst the party had no confidence in the traditional right-wing leaders in the TUC they saw a genuine "proletarian leadership" emerging amongst the newer left wing leaders (much as today's Communist Party and other leftists see such leadership in Bob Crow and Mark Serwotka et al).

The small revolutionary forces which rejected such a perspective included the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF) who opposed the CPGB's slogan of 'All Power to the General Council (of the TUC)' with the slogan 'No power to the General Council – All power to labour through its strike committees and mass meetings'. But it remained just that - a slogan. Whilst some workers did try to maintain their strike committees and defend their self-organised structures, the APCF mostly remained a voice in the wilderness as the Stalinist ice age decended.

So, was The General Strike betrayed? Could things have turned out differently?

The Trade Union leaders certainly didn't betray the workers, except in the sense that they betrayed their trust. Rather, the Trade Union leaders played their role according to their class interest – which just happened to be different to that of their members. They were forced by pressure from below to call the strike and did everything in their power to make sure that it didn't go beyond 'an industrial dispute'. They left the miners to fight on their own, facing certain defeat.

But why didn't the workers take the leadership out of their hands and extend the struggle? Certainly the creativity and organisational ability of the rank and file trade union members and, indeed, many non-unionised members, saw the strike maintained. The local initiatives were the life-blood of the struggle. Given time, the local Councils of Action may have linked-up and established a counter-power to the government. But, the fact remains that the majority of workers trusted their unions to defend their interests and did not see the need to take the struggle either out of the bureaucrats' hands or on to a higher level of struggle – the fight for power. Although workers were confused and angry that the struggle was called-off, they did not have confidence or independent organisation to carry it on.

The Communist Party, which had built a considerable rank and file movement over the previous two years, decided to put their faith in the left wing trade union leaders, rather than the self-organising abilities of the working class.

by such powerful voices of the working class experience as Ralph Chaplin and Robert Minor (before he ditched anarchism for paid Stalinism), Arturo Giovanaetti and Jack London. And all this under the very capable leadership of the remarkable Mary E.Marcy - who actually killed herself in despair when the state eventually did manage to shut down the ISR.

Following the end of WW1 the company carried on as best it could despite suffering from constant state interference and financial difficulties, but on a drastically reduced scale. New books were still published but they became rarer and rarer during this period. Finally in 1928, Charles H Kerr retired after nearly 50 years at the helm - he passed the running of the company onto John Keracher and The Proletarian Party - a very odd bunch of working class autodidacts with a passion for lectures, free 'proletarian universities' and debate. (Incidentally, Paul Mattick, the veteran Council Communist was expelled from the PP in 1931 for 'factionalism'). The PP took very careful care of the press, despite the predictions of many that they would simply utilise it to sectarian ends. Instead they used it to keep key Marxist classics in print and to circulate educational material - they even managed to make the first English translation and publication of Engel's important 'Anti-Duhring' under very difficult circumstances.

The PP finally dissolved in 1971 after a 60 year existence in which they "never merged with any other party, never admitted defeat, never disbanded, independent to the last" in the words of one of the IWW affiliated members of the group which now took over the running of the company, injecting a fresh dynamic and more lively approach than the aging members of the PP had been able to.

New books now began to appear alongside the traditional classics - the first ever biography of Lucy Parsons, books on Eugene Debs and Joe Hill (Franklin Rosemont's book on Hill being one of the best books on radical working class culture ever published), books on labour organising in the south, Haymarket collections, books on black revolt, working class autobiographies, Hobo life, Surrealism, Marxism, Jazz, poetry, cartoons and many, many other subjects without there being any noticeable let up in the pace. They have played an absolutely crucial role in keeping the idea of popular working class social history, history from below, history by for and of the working class at the forefront of our struggles - they have always known that reclaiming our past is key to building our common future.

SUNDAY 12th NOVEMBER

80th Anniversary

TO MARK THE END OF THE 1926 MINERS LOCK-OUT

RALLY AND SOCIAL 12 Noon onwards CHAIR: Davie Guy, N.U.M.

SPEAKERS: Industrial Workers of the World and Tyneside Anarchists

Sponsors: N.U.M, I.W.W., Communist Party of Great Britain (Weekly Worker), Class War.

SUNDAY DINNER (INC. VEGGIE/VEGAN) 2.30pm* BRIDGE HOTEL

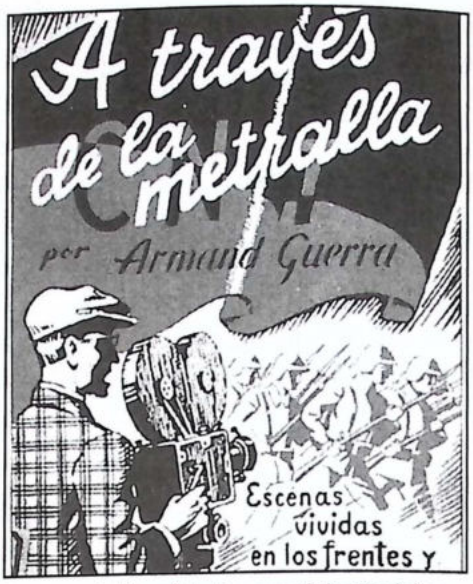
SOCIAL: TONY CORCORAN AND FRIENDS CASTLE GARTH

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

***call Dave on 07900160841 a.s.a.p. if you want Sunday dinner**

armand guerra

Typesetter, film maker, scenario writer, actor and anarchist



Armand Guerra was born Jose Estivalis Cabo at Liria near Valencia on 4th January 1886, the son of a farmer and of a mother who was already looking after a child of 5 years. First as a choirboy and then as a pupil at a seminary in Valencia, he developed an intense hatred for the Church.
He started working in a print shop in Valencia in 1899 at the age of 13 then in an electrical workshop with his brother Vicente. In 1907 a print workers strike broke out in Valencia and Armand was arrested and imprisoned. The police thought that after his release that he was emigrating to the West Indies. In actual fact he and his brother went to Paris and made contact with the anarchist movement there.
In 1909 he attended the meetings of the Germinal anarchist group in Geneva, Switzerland and started corresponding with the outstanding anarchist militant and doctor Pedro Vallina who had taken refuge in London. He also edited the Spanish anarchist paper Tierra y Libertad in Nice during that year (after the crushing of the 1909 revolt and the State murder of Francisco Ferrer, anarchist publications had been forbidden in Spain). Between 1910 and 1914 he wrote very regularly for the Cuban anarchist weekly Tierra published in Havana. He also wrote for the Swiss weekly anarchist paper Le Reveil, edited by Luigi Bertoni, under the anagram of his real name-Silavitse.
But Guerra was footloose and in February 1911 he traveled down through Italy before catching a boat for Cairo where he took part in the activities of Italian anarchists grouped round a print shop in the centre of the city, near the El Muski bazaar. He helped bring out a paper L'Idea, edited in three languages- Italian, French and Greek. Guerra hoped to ignite a revolt in Egypt, but the authorities forbade the publication of any anarchist texts in Arabic.

Travels in the Balkans

He started a long boat journey from Istanbul to Braila in Romania and then on to Belgrade and Salonica, all the time tracked by the police. The situation arrived that he was ordered to leave the ship AND forbidden to land! Faced with this ridiculous situation, the captain came to his defence.
He returned to France and wrote several articles about his travels. During the summers, he worked in a printshop in Deauville. It was in this town in 1912 that the Gaumont operators shot the first animated colour footage in the history of cinema on the beach at Deauville.
Perhaps inspired by this, he returned to Paris in 1913 and produced a film for the Éclair company called 'Un cri dans la jungle' (A shout in the jungle), which came to the attention of Yves Bidamant, secretary of the rail union Federation des transports par voie ferree. This individual suggested that Guerra produce films with a social message.
This began the venture of the Cinema du peuple when Estivalis began to use the pseudonym Armand Guerra for the first time. He brought out the films les Miseres de l'aiguille, le Vieux Docker, and La Commune. At this time he lived at 22 Rue du Donjon, at Vincennes across the road from the Pathe factory. He worked as a typesetter in Paris at the Maison de la Presse, which printed most of the Parisian papers. Guerra continued to write for Tierra and to work for the Cinema du Peuple.
From summer 1914, he began a correspondence with Marcel Martinet, a writer of "proletarian literature" and a member of the Cinema du people cooperative. His wife Renee contributed to the cooperative acting in the Guerra film Miseres de l'aiguille.
Unfortunately Guerra's concierge was informing on him to the police about his political activity and he was expelled from France in September 1915. He had been under police surveillance since 1909 for his editing of Tierra y Libertad.
Guerra now moved to Lausanne in Switzerland where worked as a typesetter in a print shop. At the end of 1917 he picked up his cinematic interests again by setting up the company Cervantes Films. After making 6 films, he abandoned the project, for reasons not yet known, although it was probably because of financial reasons. Most of his films were filmed outdoors rather than in a studio, incurring much higher expenses. Most of the films were about gypsies or bullfighters, themes popular with contemporary audiences. The Curse of The Gypsy had nevertheless been produced to combat

War and revolution: the Hungarian anarchist movement in World War I and the Budapest Commune (1919) by Martyn Everett. Kate Sharpley Library - 2006, £3, 28 pages

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. But Hungary had another revolution in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War. Martyn Everett describes the emergence of an anarchist movement as a breakaway from the Social Democratic Party. He then goes on to describe other emerging currents and the strong support that anarchism had for a time among Hungarian peasants. Such important figures of Hungarian anarchism and libertarian socialism such as Ervin Szabo, Ervin Batthyany, Sandor Czismadia and Jeno Henrik Schmitt, are discussed. The ideas and activities of these individuals nurtured a movement that was eventually to spark off the revolutionary days of 1918-1919.
An anti-war movement was initiated in 1917 around the Galileo Circle, a study group of students and intellectuals, and workplace activists from the Syndicalist propaganda group that had been initiated by Szabo. Agitation in the factories led to the formation of the first Workers' Council in late December 1917. Meanwhile young anarchists gained entrance into Budapest

Spanish clericalism.In 1920 he went to Lausanne again and then on to Berlin.

Nosferatu

Here, he worked as an actor, director, and translator of scenes (he spoke 7 languages). The Berlin film scene was vibrant and dynamic so he was rarely without work. He was involved in the realization of films by great directors like Murnau, Pabst and Lang.. Not only did he write scenarios but he wa sinvolved at all levels in production, including administration and writing of subtitles and the putting up of scenery. He acted of Hans Neumann's film A 'Summer Night's Dream' alongside another anarchist actor Alexander Granach.(1). There is a likelihood that he was involved in the production of the film classic Nosferatu, in which Granach acted. Like another Spanish anarchist, Valerio Orobon Fernandez, Guerra worked translating scenes for the Spanish-German firm Filmofono.

He pioneered cinema with sound in Valencia, and brought out 3 films there. In 1928 another film of his produced in Germany was banned by the censors.

Guerra became the Berlin correspondent of Popular Film, a Barcelona film review, directed by his friend Mateo Santos (who brought out the first documentary on the Spanish Civil War in 1936 for the CNT).

In 1930 he took over from another director for the film El Amour Soyeando (Love Sings). In 1931, because of protectionist laws put in place, he was forced to leave Berlin for good and settled in Madrid with Isabel Anglada with whom he had a child, Vicenta.

He played the role of a clown in 'La Alegria que Pasa' of Sabino Antonio Micon in 1934.

War and revolution

During the course of filming his first full length feature film 'Carne de Fieras' the Francoists launched their coup. Later because the CNT wanted to honour all contracts for film workers the film was finally completed and has recently been re-discovered.

Guerra wrote a fascinating account of this period in his 'A Traves de la Metralla' (Through the Grapeshot). 'Carne de Fieras' was to be Guerra's last feature film. He made attempts to make a film about Durruti, and also brought out some news-reels 'Estampas Guerreras' but the CNT needed his considerable gifts as an orator and he had to abandon the camera.

In the last months of 1937 he toured throughout southern France speaking on behalf of the CNT. To those who questioned whether Mexico was the only country to have given arms to Republican Spain, he replied that the Soviet Union has sold arms, not given them!

With Manuel Perez he translated a pamphlet about the Francoist massacres on Mallorca.

Guerra fell foul of the Communist Party that was carrying out its counterrevolution. He was arrested by the SIM (secret police controlled by the Communists) and imprisoned between 8th April and 26th August 1938 on the Uruguay, a ship converted into a prison in Barcelona harbour. He was subsequently put under house arrest. He appealed to the General Secretary of the CNT, Mariano Vasquez for freedom.

With the final triumph of Francoism, Guerra managed to escape to Sete in southern France in February 1939, avoiding the French concentration camps that were to become the home of so many fleeing from Spain. On 10th March 1939, a month after having found his family at Saint Mande, he died from a stroke, probably brought on by the extreme exhaustion of the last few years. Guerra's films were all confiscated by the Franco regime. Only over the last few years are they beginning to emerge from the archives. It would certainly be interesting to get access to them in the English-speaking world, especially his Carne de Fieras, and to see if they have weathered the test of time. The uncontestable fact remains that Guerra was not only a devoted anarchist, but had a significant role in the history of cinema.

(1) Granach was born Jessaja Granach in in1893 in Webiwici (Wierzbowce), East Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what is now the Ukraine. Born into a poor Jewish family with many siblings, he apprenticed as a baker. He came in contact with Russian-Jewish students with revolutionary ideas and in London in 1905 he set up a theatre group with other anarchists. During this time he met leading anarchists like Malatesta, Kropotkin, and above all Rudolf Rocker. In 1906 he went to Vienna and took part in Yiddish theatre, alongside his day job as a baker. In the 20s Granach became a big star in German cinema in films like Nosferatu and Kameradschaft. He gave money to the defence of Sacco and Vanzetti and starred in the play Staatsraison, written by his friend Muehsam which defended Sacco and Vanzetti and denounced the American judicial system. With the coming to power of Hitler, he fled to Russia. Arrested by the Stalin regime, only through the intervention of the German novelist Feuchtwanger was he extradited to Switzerland. From there he fled to USA, where he continued as a film actor in such films as Ninotchka and For Whom the Bell Tolls. Curiously, in later Hollywood films, Granach often played the part of evil Nazis!

army barracks to spread anti-war propaganda. A general strike calling for workers' councils broke out in January 1918 in Budapest. Strikes and agitation increased, in spite of the round-up of 50 anarchists, syndicalists and revolutionary socialists. A secret Government circular reported that: "Women workers not only frequently attempt to disrupt factories by interrupting production, but even deliver inflammatory speeches, take part in demonstrations, marching in the foremost ranks with their babies in their arms, and behaving in an insulting manner towards the representatives of the law."

The government collapsed, whilst strikes, military mutinies and massive demonstrations spread.

By November workers' militias had been formed. By early 1919 estate workers and servants began to occupy the land, whilst workers took over their factories. Soldiers' councils were formed and the unemployed put on mass demonstrations. The coalition government collapsed.

Meanwhile a Communist Party had been formed, initially set up by returning Hungarians like Bela Kun, a former Social Democrat who had become a Bolshevik whilst in Russia. Many anarchists and syndicalists believed at this time that the Bolsheviks were carrying out a libertarian revolution in Russia, and they joined the new Party. These illusions began to be shaken a little when Kun, on the orders of Lenin, engineered a merger of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party (a party that had been pro-war, and had

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Storming Heaven: Class Composition And Struggle In Italian Autonomist Marxism by Steve Wright (London: Pluto Press, 2002)

This is the only full length English language introduction to the Italian Marxist tradition of Operaismo or what later came to be known as autonomism - and which is now undergoing something of a revival under the title of 'autonomist Marxism' with Toni Negri being the mismatched poster-boy. Previously only available as a PhD thesis or in mangled electronic form it was published by Pluto Press in 2002 and has since helped to uncover the material background to the original texts which are now circulating around the internet or in samizdat form and to further open up the real significance (including the limitations) of the key concepts of the tradition for those without Italian or access to specialist libraries.

The book opens with a very dense and useful introduction to immediate post-war Italy, the political background, the historical groups, the capitalist offensive (placed within an international context) and then moves through a near chronological examination of 'workerism' as it emerged out of the resistance by workers and intellectuals to the Italian Socialist Party and Communist Party of Italy embrace of capitalist development and 'nation-building' at the level of both the enterprise and as an institutional project, then follows the key concepts as they grew out of the working classes own behaviour and the later refinements as conditions altered.

One of the strengths of the book is that Steve doesn't beat around the bush or attempt to deal with the Byzantine organisational networks that criss-crossed the various Italian territories in the 60s and 70s, beyond what is essential. He clearly outlines what he regards to be the traditions main theoretical breakthroughs and what he considers to be its central weaknesses without fuss or the need for intellectual showboating - often problem in this particular area.

Amongst these key ideas that are viewed as particularly valuable is the concept of class composition and the early emphasis of Quaderni Rossi and Classe Operaia on flesh-and-blood working class behaviours as uncovered through the original use of 'workers inquiries' by Alquati - even here though the often mechanistic chain of technical composition of labour process = political composition of working class = political organisation that was built on this approach is criticised and the later recognition of the importance of cultural factors by Primo Maggio is offered as a useful modification forced on the workerists by the reality of the internal differentiation of the working class in the factories and outside.

Other key concepts that are welcomed are the (sometimes confused) recognition of the importance of reproduction to capital, of social issues outside of the factory, of the rediscovery of working class histories long sidelined by the official parties historical narratives and of the centrality of working class movement to the development of capital - the discovery of the working class perspective as opposed to the logic of capital - an especially clear discussion of Mario Tronti's early texts makes this often difficult overturning of traditional Marxist approaches very simple to grasp.

Steve is equally as strong on the shortcomings of autonomism, and chief amongst the sinners is Tony Negri who comes in for some sustained (and justified) criticism for his 'tendency' to abstractly impose a few characteristics of a limited section of the working class across the whole of the social terrain and to then make great leaps from this starting point - he quotes Tronti's apt warning that "a discourse which grow upon itself carries the mortal danger of verifying itself always and only through the successive passages of its own formal logic" - which seems more than little prophetic given Negri's recent trajectory...

Other workerists are criticised for their overwhelming concentration on the immediate process of production beyond the point where it was sustainable and the over-reaction when this became apparent to them - the consequent ditching of the mass worker thesis and the embrace of the socialised worker to the detriment of those still in the factories being particularly short-sighted and damaging. In fact, this sort of wild flip-flopping in pursuit of quick political gains is consistently deplored throughout the book. As is the gradual degeneration of the leading groups of autonomia into 'political micro-factions' - especially of the 'organised' section of the area of autonomy - who aped the forms of the historic left and tried to force the rhythm of the movement via a slightly modified vanguardism with disastrous results.

One slight criticism that I have is that the 1977 events are not really entered into in any great detail - in terms of activity anyway. There is, though, a very interesting look at Sergio Bologna's famous essay 'The Tribe of Moles' which covers the composition and experience of the movement during that period. A similar point could be made as regards the terrible state repression that autonomia faced in the late 70s.

This book is all the more useful as it doesn't come from someone who has followed Negri and others into the post-modern swamp, and who hasn't rejected the key breakthroughs that were made in the 60s and 70s but instead argues that they should be built upon whilst recognising the changed conditions in which we find ourselves today - that would be to stick to the original promises of the workerists - something which many of the most prominent names connected with the traditions were unable to do themselves.

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attacked the emerging revolutionary movement). The much larger Social Democrats effectively swallowed the Communist Party. Some anarchists left to set up the Anarchist Union and began setting up centres and forming their own militias. Others remained as a libertarian opposition within the merged party.

Meanwhile a Socialist Republic had been formed, followed by the forming of a Revolutionary Council in Budapest - the Budapest Commune. Whilst libertarian influence was demonstrated in its call for the abolition of bureaucracy, and the suppression of the army, Bolshevik influence was equally apparent in the call for land nationalization, where the original owners were appointed as "commissars for production". This disarmed revolution in the countryside and caused resentment among the peasantry. Kun started taking authoritarian measures against the workers, calling for increased production and arresting several syndicalist militants.

Joaquin Perez
1907 - 2006

In the late 1980s I attended a film show in London on the achievements of anarchism during the Spanish Civil War. At one point an elderly Spanish anarchist sitting next to me began weeping quietly. The passion and conviction of Spanish anarchism had suddenly been made manifest.

Later on I learnt that he was Joaquin Perez and was one of the last surviving members of the heroic band of anarchist fighters, the Friends of Durruti.

Joaquin Perez Navarro was born into a poor peasant family at Calpes de Arenso near Castillon on 4th August 1907, the eldest of three children – a sister and brother. He lost his father at the age of 11. He emigrated with his mother to Barcelona in 1918. There he worked as a hodcarrier's mate before becoming a waiter, a profession which he remained in for the rest of his working life. In 1919 at the age of 12, he joined the mass anarchosyndicalist union the CNT.

He took part in the fighting in Barcelona against the Francoist uprising and then immediately went to fight on the Aragon front in one of the anarchist militia columns. He worked in the anarchist collectives of Gelsa and Pina de Ebro. In 1937 he joined Los Amigos de Durruti (Friends of Durruti) a group of anarchists pledged to fight militarization and the betrayals of the Communist Party and named after the legendary anarchist fighter and militia commander Buenaventura Durruti. He fought with the Friends on the barricades in Barcelona in May 1937 (these events are depicted at the end of Ken Loach's film Land and Freedom). Later he fought with the Iron Column, an anarchist militia that had initially been constituted from prisoners released from the jails of the Republic. At the end of 1938 he was imprisoned and tortured by the Stalinists, who condemned him to death and put him in Montjuic prison.

He escaped from there with the fall of Barcelona to the Francoists and reached France. There he was imprisoned in the French concentration camps at Argeles and Barcares. Later on he was in a work gang building docks at Brest. With the German victory over France, he managed to escape to England.

In London he was involved in the activities of a Spanish exile anarchist group. Between 1969 and 1974 he was involved in a liaison commission of the CNT in Britain.

When he first arrived in England he worked in the building trade but very soon transferred to catering and worked at the Berkeley Hotel in Mayfair for quite a few years. He then moved to the George & Dragon Restaurant in South Kensington (which was privately owned but eventually bought out by Wheelers) and retired from there at the age of 65.

Joaquin was totally committed to the anarchist movement and time never faded his passion and fervour for the injustices that were committed during the Spanish Civil War. He could recall every detail and emotion as if it had only happened yesterday and, in fact, at the age of 92 he finally finished writing a book outlining his experiences during that time.

By all accounts, Joaquin was quite a ladies' man, but in 1953 he was "caught" by Carmen, his best friend's sister-in-law – he had met her on her arrival at the airport, immediately fell in love and they married within Carmen's 3-month stay in the UK. Carmen and Joaquin were married for 50 years but sadly he lost his beloved "Chati" two years ago and life was never really the same again. He is survived by their only daughter, Violeta.

Joaquin was a very content, gracious and quiet individual with very strong principles and high standards. However, he was also a charmer and flirted outrageously with most of the nurses and carers at the nursing home where he lived for the last year of his life and where he was given untold love and affection by all the staff.

In the last years of his life he wrote a number of books: "Relato Poetico" his experiences as one of the Friends of Durruti (London1995), "SIM" on the activities of the Spanish secret police, jointly with Francisco Piqueras (Barcelona 1998) and "Yo luche por la revolucion social del pueblo espanol y de todos los pueblos del mundo" (Barcelona1999).

He died in his sleep in London on 21st August at the age of 99. He was the last surviving member of the Friends of Durruti (the group's founders, Jaime Balius and Pablo Ruiz had died a few years before). His body was cremated on the 30th August, wrapped, according to his wishes, in the red and black flag of the CNT and of anarchism.

Defending Anonymity

Since the ID Card Act became law in March this year Tony Blair has said it will be a "major plank" of Labour's next election manifesto, whilst heir-apparent Gordon Brown aims to increase even further the use of ID databases by private companies like banks and supermarkets. Whatever they are saying now, the Conservatives too tried to give us ID cards a decade ago when Michael Howard was Home Secretary under John Major's government, and were only stopped because they lost the 1997 General Election. It's clear that both parties have a long history of repression when in power and that ID will be beaten on the streets, by collective action, or not at all. The AF's free pamphlet, Defending Anonymity, looks at what the new Act will mean in practice and analyses the real reasons why the State wants to track us all with identity databases and related technologies. It suggests ways to fight whilst explaining why some arguments against ID are worse than counterproductive.

The revised second edition of Defending Anonymity is available online at www.afed.org.uk, and in print from our usual address (please send Stamped Addressed Envelope).

Kun's military policies were equally disastrous. Initially revolutionary militias had swept back attacking troops led by the Romanians with the support of the French government. Kun called for a peace treaty with the Czechoslovak government and thus sacrificed Slovak revolutionaries who had also moved to set up a Republic of Councils. This added to growing demoralization. Kun and his Bolshevik core negotiated safe passage out of Hungary, deliberately excluding anarchists and oppositional Communists. The Budapest Commune was drowned in blood and many revolutionaries murdered, some in ways like something out of the Middle Ages.

As Martyn Everett remarks "The pressure of war, which continued in Hungary long after it had finished elsewhere in Central Europe, also forced anarchists to cooperate with others when in more peaceful circumstances they would have chosen different tactics. As crisis enveloped the Commune and the authoritarianism of the Social Democratic-Communist alliance became more pronounced, members of the Anarchist Union attempted to develop an alternative independent strategy, based on broadening the social base of the revolution, but the pace of events cut this short."

erich muehsam

Poet, playwright, bohemian, anarchist revolutionary

Erich Muehsam was born in Berlin in 1878 into a fairly well-to-do Jewish family. Soon after his family moved to Luebeck in north Germany where his father worked as a pharmacist (in fact the pharmacy is still there).

He hated the school where he was sent, which was known for its authoritarian discipline and its unsparing use of corporal punishment. Erich was often a victim of "the unspeakable flailings which were supposed to beat out of me all my innate feelings" because his rebellious nature often clashed with the school regime. In 1896 he wrote an anonymous piece for the socialist paper Luebecker Volsboten denouncing one of the school's most brutal teachers. This caused a scandal and Erich was expelled for taking part in socialist activities.

Erich had wanted to be a writer and poet from an early age and he left Luebeck to pursue this aim in Berlin in 1900. He got involved in a group called Neue Gemeinschaft (New Society) which combined socialist ideology with experiments in communal living. Here he met Gustav Landauer who introduced him to anarchist communist ideas. Muehsam contributed to Kampf, the anarchist paper of his friend Senna Hoy, who later died in terrible conditions in a Russian prison.

In 1904 Erich went to Ascona in Italian Switzerland to live in the artists' colony of Monte Verita (the writer Herman Hesse, the dance theorist Laban, the psychotherapist Otto Gross and many Daddaists and Expressionists lived there at one time or other).

He began writing plays there, the first of which, The Con Men, mixed new political theory with traditional dramatic forms. He also continued contributing to many anarchist papers, which drew the attention of the German authorities. He was considered one of the most dangerous anarchist agitators.

He moved to Munich in 1908 and took part in the cabaret movement. He did not care much for writing cabaret songs, but he achieved much notice because of them.

In 1911 he founded the paper Kain which advocated anarchist communism. He castigated and ridiculed the German state, fighting capital punishment and theatre censorship, and prophetically analysing international affairs. The World War that he had predicted led to the suspension of Kain. At first Erich publicly supported the war, but by the end of 1914 was persuaded that he had been wrong, saying that, "I will probably have to bear the sin of betraying my ideals for the rest of my life". He threw himself into anti-war activity taking part in various actions. He supported the strikes that were beginning to break out. As these became more widespread and began to take on a revolutionary nature, Erich was among those arrested and imprisoned in April 1918, and then freed in November.

With the fall of the Kaiser and King Ludwig of Bavaria, Munich burst into revolt. Muehsam and Landauer as well as Ret Marut (later known as the novelist B. Traven) were among those agitating for the setting up of Workers Councils which led on to the founding of the Bavarian Council Republic. This lasted only a week. The Social Democrats, terrified by the thought of revolution, allied with the right. The Freikorps, a reactionary militia organised by the socialist minister Noske and composed of right wing military and students, crushed the Council Republic. Landauer died under the blows of rifle butts and boots.

Muehsam escaped but was later captured and sent to prison for 15 years. In prison, Erich continued with his writing, composing many poems and the play Judas. Released in the amnesty of 1924, he returned to a Munich in the grip of apathy. He joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Germany (FKAD). He restarted Kain but this failed after a few issues. He then brought out Fanal (The Torch) where he attacked both the Communists and the far right. His openly revolutionary tone and his attempts to stop the rise of the right made him a hate figure among conservatives and Nazis.

He used satire to ridicule the Nazis with short stories and poems. This came to the personal attention of Hitler and Goebbels, arousing their anger. He agitated for the freeing of the revolutionary Max Hoelz and wrote a play, Staatsraeson (For reasons of State) in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti), in 1928.

In 1930 he completed his last play Alle Wetter (All Hang) which called for mass revolution as the only way to stop the seizure of power by the radical Right.

A few hours after Van der Lubbe had set fire to the Reichstag in February 1933, Muehsam was arrested and then spent the last 17 months of his life in the concentration camps of Sonnenburg, Brandenburg and Oranienburg. His teeth were smashed in with rifle butts, his scalp was branded with a swastika from a red-hot iron and he was hospitalised. He was forced to dig his own grave for a mock execution, and his body became a mass of bruises and wounds. His tormentors tried to force him to sing the Nazi song the Horst Wessel Lied. He refused to give in and sang the International. " Thanks to his will power he resisted all attempts to humiliate him" (Augustin Souchy).

Despite these tortures Erich remained intransigent to the end. Finally he was tortured and murdered on the night of 9th July 1934. After beatings, a Stormtrooper leader administered a lethal injection and then a suicide by hanging was faked.

Never in my life have I learnt
To submit to anyone
Here I am locked up,
Far from my home,
My wife, my workshop.
And even if they kill me,
If I must die,
To give up is to lie!

But if the chains broke
Then I would breathe in sunshine
At the top of my lungs- Tyranny!
And I would cry to the people: be free!
Forget to submit yourselves!
To give up is to lie!

From Muehsam's poem 'The Prisoner'

Back issues

Back issues of Organise! are still available from the London address. They cost 20p each + SAE. Alternatively, send us a fiver and we'll send you one of everything plus whatever else we can find lying around.

Issue 27: LA riots; Yugoslavia; Malcomn X.

Issue 50: GM foods; Who owns the land; War in Kosovo; Ireland - the `peace` process.

Issue 51: War in Kosovo; Roots of our movement; Land and freedom; East Timor.

Issue 52: Mass direct action; East Timor; Youth resistance to the nazis; Workplace notes.

Issue 54: Civil war in Colombia; Humans and animals; Giving up activism; Dissent.

Issue 55: Land and ecology; Kropotkin and tribal society; Mental health.

Articles from Organise! can be found on the internet at www.afed.org.uk
You can also e-mail us at organise@afed.org.uk

Issue 56: Anti capitalism; Riots in Oldham; Anarchist culture.

Issue 57: The war against terror; Class war in Argentina; ADD; Primitivism.

Issue 58: Argentina: growing resistance; Paganism; Immigrant labour; Angola 3; US anarchist poets; Yellow House

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Issue 60: Iraq War; Argentina; White Boys in Ireland; Fatherhood; Yelenski's fable; Senna Hoy.

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Issue 62: Participatory economics; Anarchist movement in Argentina; Camille Pissarro; International or Anarchist Federations.

Issue 63: Anarchist movement in Argentina - part two; Nanotechnology; Resistance in Iraq; School strikes.

Issue 64: G8 special; Casualisation; ID cards; Women's struggles in Iraq

Issue 65: International special. Reports from Australia, Belarus, China and Croatia.

Issue 66: The fight against ID cards; Rossport; Mountain top removal; Empowering prisoners; Spanish revolution 1936.

Stormy Petrel pamphlets

Towards a Fresh Revolution by The Friends of Durruti, writings from the much misunderstood group who attempted to defend and extend the Spanish Revolution of 1936. 75p plus postage.

Malatesta's Anarchism and Violence, an important document in the history of anarchist theory refutes the common misrepresentation of anarchism as mindless destruction while restating the need for revolution to create a free and equal society. 50p plus postage.

A Brief Flowering of Freedom: The Hungarian Revolution 1956. An exciting account of one of the first post-war uprisings against the Stalinist monolith. Also includes a history of the Hungarian anarchist movement. 60p plus postage.

Anarchist Federation pamphlets in languages other than English

As We See It: Available in Welsh, Serbo-Croat, Greek, German and now, thanks to our Spanish comrades, in Spanish and Portuguese. They are each available for 70p including postage and packaging from our London address.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation: Available in Serbo-Croat for 70p including p&p.

If anybody you know who speaks Serbo-Croat in Britain or you have contacts in the countries of former Yugoslavia where Serbo-Croat is understood then why not send them copies?

German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish translations of our **Aims and Principles** are also available for 20p plus postage.

Write to the London address for orders and bulk orders.

Other Anarchist Federation publications

All pamphlets include the cost of postage.

NEW EDITION: Defending Anonymity - Free - ID cards are coming to Britain (and elsewhere) very soon. This pamphlet aims to see through Labour's smokescreens of 'identity theft' and the 'war on terror'. Printed copies Donation + SAE.

NEW: Working Class Resistance to the Nazis - £1.50 - a major new pamphlet detailing the resistance of young and old to the rule of the Nazis in Europe.

Beating The Poll Tax (online only) - a relevant 'blast from the past', our out-of-print pamphlet that encouraged and analysed the rise of mass revolt against the Community Charge in 1989/90. Available from www.afed.org.uk

Anarchism As We See It - £1 - Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy to read form.

The Anarchist Movement In Japan - £1.80 - A fascinating account of Japanese anarchism in the 20th Century. Japan had an anarchist movement of tens of thousands. This pamphlet tells their story.

Aspects of Anarchism - £1 - Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront. Collected articles from the pages of Organise! on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

Against Parliament, for Anarchism - £1 - Insights into the political parties of Britain and why anarchists oppose all parties.

Basic Bakunin - £1 - This revised edition outlines the ideas of one of the 19th century founders of class struggle anarchism.

The Role of the Revolutionary Organisation - £1 - This 2003 reprint explains the concept of revolutionary organisation and its structure. All libertarian revolutionaries should read this fundamental text.

Beyond Resistance - A revolutionary manifesto - £2 - A detailed analysis of modern capitalism and the state and our understanding of how they will be overthrown.

Work - Why it must be destroyed before it destroys us - £1 - The title says it all really.

Ecology and Class: Where There's Brass, There's Muck - £2 - Our newly-revised and extended pamphlet on ecology.

Aims and principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without the use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We oppose organised religion and beliefs.

Join the AF! Find out more!

If you agree with the aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation (see above) then why not apply to join the organisation. Maybe you want to find out more about what the AF thinks on a particular subject or the ideas we believe in. Perhaps you would just like to be put on our mailing list.

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Write to our national contact at:

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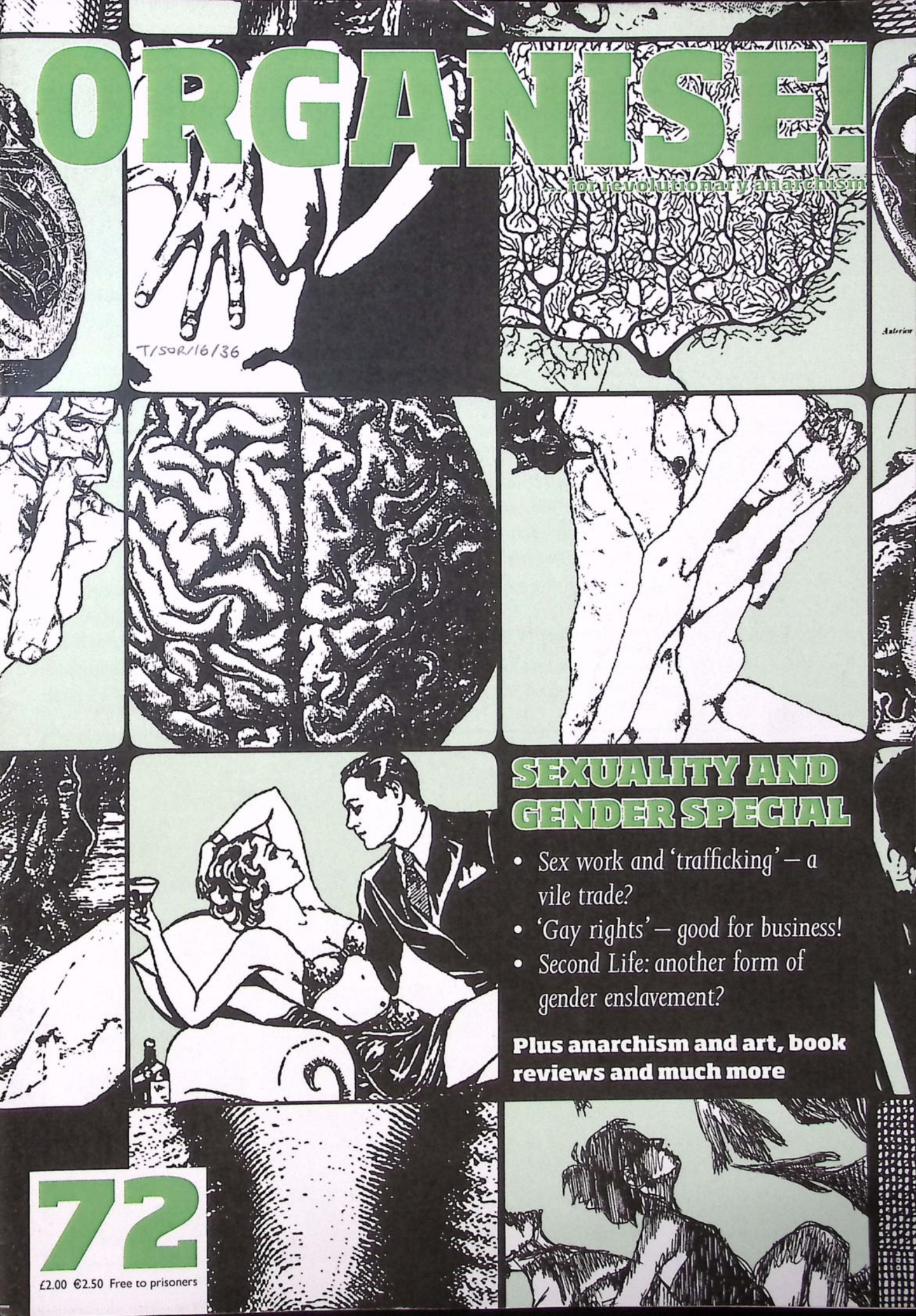
ORGANISE!

for revolutionary anarchism



SEXUALITY AND GENDER SPECIAL

- Sex work and 'trafficking' – a vile trade?
- 'Gay rights' – good for business!
- Second Life: another form of gender enslavement?

Plus anarchism and art, book reviews and much more

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Organise!
The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation
Issue 72—Summer 2009

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of *Organise!* will be **18th September 2009**. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

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What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has written the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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£10·00 for a joint subscription to *Organise!* and *Resistance*.

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Joining the Anarchist Federation

Membership of the Anarchist Federation is open to all who agree with our aims and principles (found on the back cover). For more information write to: Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX

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Editorial –

What's in the latest *Organise!*

"Jacqui Smith's proposals have very little to do with protecting the women, men and transgendered people who work as prostitutes. What they're really about is controlling immigration, keeping prostitutes divided and increasing state control over people's lives." So opens our issue on sexuality and gender.
We take a look at the sex industry and 'trafficking' and the forms of gender enslavement in the online community, Second Life.

We also feature articles on the state of the gay rights movement, neurosexism and gendered language in Ursula Le Guin's Gethen Stories.
Barack Obama and Hugo Chavez get a dressing-down as we take a look at a few of the 'messiahs' the left is putting its faith in today.

This issue we also publish an extract from our work in progress, a new volume in our Anarchist Communist Editions devoted entirely to the relationship between anarchism and art. This major work, in collaboration with many contemporary artists, will explore what our modern 'culture of resistance' would look like. Watch this space for more information.

As always, if the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Write us a letter or send an email and we'll do our best to publish it in a future issue.

PRESS FUND APPEAL

Can you spare some cash to support the publication of *Organise!* and other AF publications?

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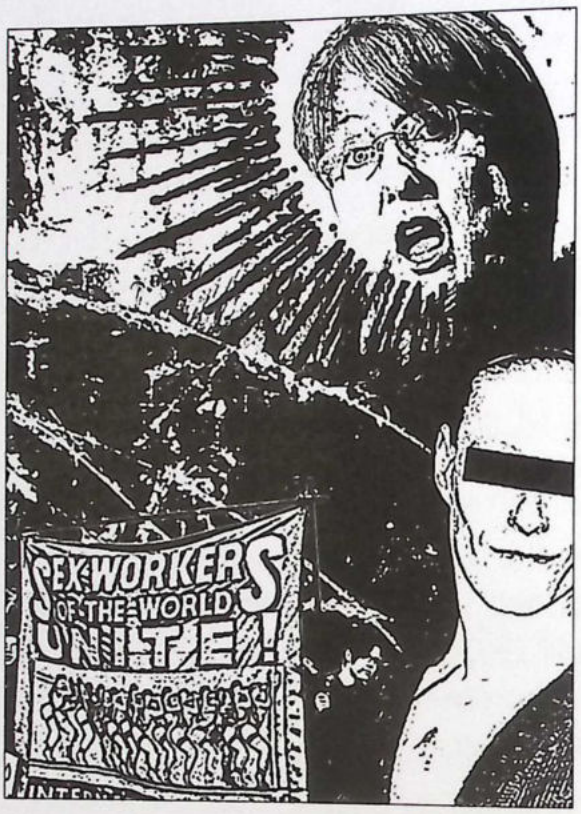
You can also make a donation online at www.afed.org.uk

Sex work and 'trafficking' –

A vile trade?

UK Home Secretary Jacqui Smith has declared war on prostitution. In November 2008 she unveiled a set of proposals to criminalise prostitutes' clients as well as giving new powers to the police to close down brothels. She's doing all this in the name of 'protecting vulnerable women' – women who, she says, are exploited, 'trafficked' and coerced into the sex industry against their will. But in fact her proposals have very little to do with protecting the women, men and transgendered people who work as prostitutes. What they're really about is controlling immigration, keeping prostitutes divided – amongst themselves and from other workers – and increasing state control over people's lives.



What is 'trafficking'?

In announcing her proposals for this new legislation, Smith declared that she wanted to target the client as "the person responsible for creating the demand for prostitution markets which in turn creates demand for the vile trade of women to be trafficked for sexual exploitation". So what is this "vile trade", and who are its victims?

First of all, there is a difference between "trafficking" and people-smuggling. According to the definitions laid down by the United Nations, smuggling is helping someone to cross a border illegally in return for payment. "Trafficking", on the other hand, is using either force or deception to make someone move for the purposes of exploitation – the movement itself does not necessarily have to be illegal, or even across a national border, to count as "trafficking". Anti-Slavery International, an NGO which campaigns against all forms of forced labour, has documented cases of people being trafficked into the UK to work in agriculture, construction, domestic work, food processing and packaging, care work, catering and many forms of casual labour as well as in the sex industry. Most of those people were coerced to work in appalling conditions by means of debt bondage (agencies charge the workers a fee for arranging their work, and the workers are then forced to work until they have paid it off), by removal of passports or other identity documents, or simply by means of threats, intimidation and violence. Anti-Slavery International has also found that many – perhaps even most – trafficked migrant workers actually enter the country perfectly legally. In other words, "trafficking" is a workers' rights issue, not an immigration issue.

Not surprisingly, the UN definition of "trafficking" has become the gold standard for international anti-trafficking initiatives. In 2007 the government published the UK Human Trafficking Action Plan, which quotes the UN definition at length and proudly boasts that the government has now adopted a "human rights based approach" to trafficking. But a closer look at all these declarations and action plans soon reveals that these so-called human rights are a world away from any genuine notion of workers' rights – whether for prostitutes or anyone else.

Human rights? Whose human rights?

For sex workers, the UN definition of "trafficking" – the movement of persons by force or deception for purposes of exploitation – is dangerously ambiguous. It's that word "exploitation" that's the catch. The UN definition goes on to say that by "exploitation" they mean (a) prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, (b) forced labour, (c) slavery or slavery-like practices, (d) servitude, or (e) the removal of organs. Notice that prostitution is listed separately from either forced labour or slavery. In other words, it is simply assumed that all prostitution is by definition a form of exploitation. What's more, if you are a migrant sex worker, the mere fact that you are working in prostitution in a foreign country is often regarded as evidence that you are a victim of "trafficking".

But the idea of "exploitation" used in anti-trafficking policies is not just bad news for sex workers in particular. It also makes a mockery of work in general. The UK Human Trafficking Action Plan demonstrates this very clearly when it turns its attention to forced labour. The Plan notes without irony that "One of the difficulties we will face in investigating trafficking for forced labour is distinguishing between poor

working conditions and situations involving forced labour. The element of coercion is an important indication of the latter." At this point we might start to wonder who on earth would be working in such poor conditions unless they had been forced into it! The fact is that millions of low-paid workers in the UK and elsewhere are forced into exploitation – by threats of violence or incarceration, by debt, hunger and the need for survival in an economic system which is intended to produce profit for the few rather than to provide for the needs of all. The difference between the kind of exploitation experienced by "trafficking" victims and the exploitation experienced by all the other workers facing low pay and poor conditions is not qualitative but quantitative – they are at the extreme end of a continuum of misery under capitalism.

So the so-called human rights approach to "trafficking" is based on a thoroughly confused notion of "exploitation" which does nothing to get to the real roots of workers' misery, whether in the sex industry or in any other sector. On the one hand, it assumes that all prostitutes are exploited simply because they are prostitutes, as if they had no will or agency of their own; on the other hand it also assumes that workers in any other industry are only exploited if they have been subjected to specific types of coercion, regardless of how low their pay or how poor their working conditions may be. This only reinforces the stigmatisation of prostitutes as "other" and keeps them divided from workers in other sectors.

Talk of "trafficking" also helps to reinforce divisions between migrant and non-migrant workers by promoting the perception that the exploitation and oppression faced by "trafficked" workers is fundamentally different from the exploitation and oppression faced by all working class people everywhere. It helps to disguise the fact that what we all have in common is not just our exploitation at work – or, for increasing numbers of us these days, out of work, as we become "surplus to requirements" – but also our ability to unite and fight back.

State control and market forces

The state metes out different kinds of treatment to different categories of "trafficked" workers after they have been "rescued". There are currently no government support agencies for "trafficked" workers in any sector other than prostitution. Once you are discovered to have been "trafficked" and your "traffickers" have been arrested, you're on your own – and if you entered the country illegally you can expect to be deported. Nor does the government provide any support for men or transgendered people who have been "trafficked". However, the situation is different for "trafficked" female prostitutes, who can be taken in by the Poppy Project, a government-funded agency offering "support and accommodation". The Poppy Project "encourages" women to co-operate with the authorities – for example, by providing intelligence to the police or other state agencies – in order to qualify for long-term support. The Project also explicitly shares the UN's assumptions about prostitution and exploitation, and puts a lot of energy into helping the women in its care to leave prostitution, while doing precisely nothing to promote the rights or welfare of women who remain in the industry. So under this apparently benevolent guise, the government can exercise a great deal of control over migrant sex workers. If you are a migrant prostitute and get arrested on some prostitution-related charge or other, you have a choice: go along with the assumption that you are a victim of "trafficking", in which case you will be offered accommodation, a subsistence allowance, healthcare and education, on condition that you play along with the authorities; or insist that you are working in the industry of your own free will, in which case you will be prosecuted – and, unless all your papers are in order, deported. Victim or criminal, "vulnerable woman" or whore – the state has got you either way. The UK Human Trafficking Action Plan cites the Poppy Project as an example of best practice, and reveals that the government intends to extend similar schemes for workers "trafficked" into forced labour. Such workers will, for example, be entitled to apply for residence permits for as long as they co-operate with the authorities.

The sleight-of-hand which equates all prostitution with exploitation, and assumes that all prostitutes are victims, is not unique to the Poppy Project, nor to the UN. It dates back to at least the 19th century, when Christian philanthropists like Josephine Butler notoriously campaigned to "rescue" vulnerable "unfortunates" – working-class women and girls – from a life of vice and train them for so-called decent employment such as domestic work. This assumption denies sex workers any agency of their own, treating them as poor helpless individuals who need to be saved rather than as workers with their own voice, their own strength, and their own demands. It's exactly the sleight-of-hand which Jacqui Smith is performing now in her

attempt to criminalise the clients of all prostitutes in the name of "protecting vulnerable women". The rhetoric of "trafficking" and "vulnerable women" acts as a smoke screen from behind which Smith can attack prostitutes in general by further eroding their working rights and conditions. Smith's proposals do nothing to help any men, women, transgendered people or children who might want to get out of the sex industry, nor to improve the health, safety or working conditions of those who simply prefer prostitution to any of the other kinds of work available to them (or to unemployment). In fact, as many sex workers' organisations have been quick to point out, closing down brothels and criminalising clients in the way Smith is proposing will actually make prostitutes more vulnerable, driving the trade further underground and forcing workers onto the streets and away from relative safety and solidarity with their co-workers in the brothels. The rhetoric of "trafficking" may also serve to reinforce divisions between migrant sex workers and local prostitutes. Migrant workers who have entered the country illegally and/or with the help of third parties, and who are therefore in fear of arrest and deportation, may be forced as a consequence to accept lower pay or worse conditions for their work than local prostitutes would usually tolerate. Local prostitutes often blame migrant workers for undercutting prices and lowering the standard of working conditions in general.

The rhetoric of "trafficking" is also being used as a pretext to clamp down even further on immigration. Despite the fact that the UN definition of "trafficking" very clearly states that "trafficking" does not necessarily mean illegal immigration – or indeed any immigration at all – the UK Human Trafficking Action Plan is only too happy to present "trafficking" as one of "the main threats and challenges to our borders". The Plan states that a series of new immigration controls will be introduced over the next ten years to tighten the UK's borders, including the use of biometrics, and that the prevention and detection of "trafficking" will form an essential part of immigration control. This can only mean that it will become even more difficult for migrant workers to enter the UK – which in turn, of course, will make workers more likely to pay agencies or other third parties to get through the UK borders, placing them at greater potential risk of debt bondage or the loss of identity documents. In other words, the clampdown on immigration on the pretext of "trafficking" will again make prostitutes and other migrant workers more vulnerable to abuse.

Many women, men and transgendered people working as prostitutes in the UK face a struggle against low pay, poor working conditions, and risks to their health and safety of a kind which that workers in other sectors do not. They also face criminalisation and police harassment at work, not to mention vicious stigmatisation and discrimination from society at large. Talk of "trafficking" does nothing to tackle any of these issues. What it does instead is to criminalise prostitutes and their clients even further while also eroding prostitutes' pay and conditions – a double whammy of state control and market forces which can only make prostitutes' working lives more difficult. Little wonder that sex worker activists have demanded that all "trafficking" policies be scrapped and the term "trafficking" itself abandoned. It is not just useless – it's positively harmful.

Sex workers' rights and anarchist communism

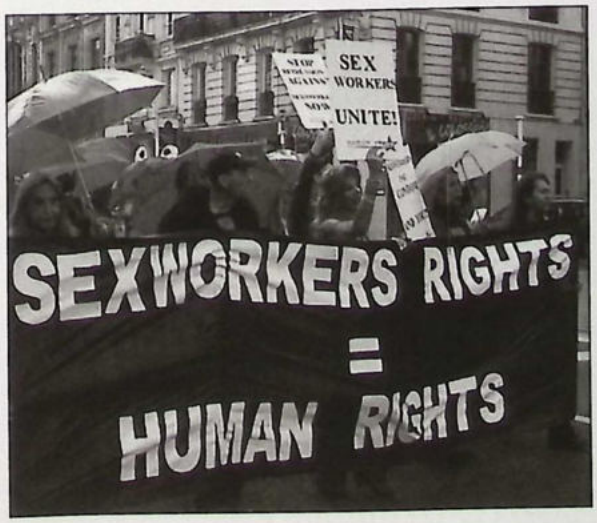
Governments and policy-makers like to stoke the myth that prostitutes are simply victims – at worst helpless sex slaves, at best pathetic fools who are too stupid and/or drug-addled and/or "socially excluded" to know any better. But prostitutes and other sex workers have a long history of struggle against oppression and stigmatisation, and in the last 15 years the international sex workers' rights movement has grown in strength and confidence. In 2005 the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) issued both a manifesto and a declaration of rights in the wake of a huge and important international conference of sex worker activists in Brussels. Their demands include the right to travel and cross borders for purposes of sex work, an end to abusive working practices and conditions in the industry, effective action against violence and coercion, and the right to enter, remain in or leave the industry of one's own free will. Here in the UK the International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW) was founded in 2000 and subsequently became a branch of the GMB trade union with TUC-recognition. This means that prostitutes and other sex workers, such as dancers and porn actors, can join the IUSW and gain all of the usual GMB member benefits, including legal advice and support over health and safety issues at work. But the IUSW is much more than just a GMB branch – it campaigns actively for sex workers' rights and is involved in a number of workers' projects and initiatives, including the recently-founded X:Talk project, an

organisation specifically by and for migrant sex workers.

Organisations like these are vitally important in the struggle for sex workers' rights. Not only do they campaign hard against the criminalisation and oppression of prostitutes and other sex workers, but they also foster a sense of pride and empowerment among sex workers themselves. In an industry where stigmatisation and shame have been a stock-in-trade for centuries, it is hard to underestimate the importance of initiatives such as Prostitution Pride marches, or the appearance on demonstrations of red umbrellas, an internationally recognised symbol of sex workers' rights since their use by demonstrators in Venice in 2001. In all of these organisations, sex workers' self-organisation and self-determination are the cornerstone of every campaign. Clients, allies and friends may be welcome to support the campaigns or even to join certain organisations, but it is the sex workers themselves who call the shots, write the demands, organise the campaigns, and make their voices heard.

From a revolutionary anarchist perspective, the self-organisation of sex workers to defend themselves against criminalisation and oppression can be seen in its rightful place in the overall struggle for workers' self-determination. But of course workers' self-determination as such is only part of the story. The struggle for anarchist communism is not just a struggle for workers but also a struggle against work as we know it today. Our ultimate aim is to build a society where no-one has to work for a wage – where goods and services are distributed on the basis of need, and where we all work together to nourish our communities rather than just to earn a wage. While prostitutes today are rightly proud of their own skill, professionalism and earning power, we want to see a world free from capitalism, where everyone will take pride in our abilities to control our own lives and co-operate to organise our own communities.

There are lots of reasons why these anarchist goals might at first glance seem quite alien to the sex workers' movement. Centuries of criminalisation and state harassment have meant that sex worker activists are much more focussed on the reform or abolition of specific laws and policies than on the abolition of capitalism as a whole. In fact sex worker activists today are more likely to be heard defending their right to work than attacking the institution of waged work as such. For example, one of the primary demands of the sex workers' movement is precisely to have prostitution recognised as a legitimate form of work and prostitutes as legitimate workers. In a context where for centuries prostitution has been dismissed as crime or immorality rather than acknowledged as real work, that demand makes perfect sense as a way of improving prostitutes' lives under capitalism. Similarly, the sex workers' movement's demands today tend to call for states and international agencies to rescind some laws while enforcing or introducing others. The ICRSE manifesto, for example, demands the decriminalisation of sex work, but also demands the introduction of anti-discrimination laws and of legislation to protect sex workers' employment and conditions. Again, these demands make perfect sense for sex workers living under the current system of nation-states, legislative powers and international agencies. But surely the logical conclusion of migrant sex workers' demands, including their rejection of the language of "trafficking", must be a demand for the lifting or outright abolition of all national borders – no borders, no passports, no "traffickers".



If demands such as those of the ICRSE were met, sex workers would at last have the same rights as workers in other sectors. And for an anarchist communist perspective on sex work, that's precisely the point – because the rights, and the lives, of all workers under capitalism are basically shit, and going from bad to worse. Sex workers' self-organisation to pursue their demands has been inspirational, but for anarchist communists it's just one step towards our larger goal: the self-organisation of all workers to create a world without bosses or borders, where our lives will be organised around co-operation and solidarity rather than wages. It's capitalism's exploitation in all workers' lives, brains and bodies for money that's the real "vile trade".

Useful websites

International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe – www.sexworkeurope.org
International Union of Sex Workers – www.iusw.org
X:Talk – www.xtalkproject.net

'Gay rights' – Good for business!

As if more proof were needed that Stonewall and other such 'gay rights' organisations are utterly exhausted of commitment to any genuine LGBTQ liberation, this March they held their annual Workplace Conference, the conclusion of which was that LGBT equality in the workplace should be sought because 'it makes economic sense'.

Well that's great, but making our bosses that little bit richer is little consolation to the four in five of us who will suffer verbal abuse due to our sexuality, and is certainly no consolation at all to the massive 30% of gay or bisexual males who will attempt suicide in their lifetimes!

When Stonewall aren't spending vast sums of money on irrelevant conferences, they can be found snuggling up to New Labour, praising them on the great LGBT-friendly achievements of the past 12 years (many of which were forced upon the UK by European Union directives – oops). There are many things wrong with 'leading' gay rights organisations such as Stonewall, from their willingness to ignore the rights of trans people to their 'only gay rights organisation in the village' attempts to undermine any attempts at establishing real LGBTQ organisations. But what Stonewall really lack is the recognition that LGBTQ liberation does not revolve around consumption, and that 'equality' i.e. being exploited just as much as working-class heterosexual people – is not our aim.

The early gay militants would no longer hide who they were at London's First Gay Liberation Front March, Trafalgar Park, August 1971

Liberation means more than just equality. It means unapologetic defiance of arbitrary sexual morality and conservatism. And since we cannot rely on Stonewall to represent LGBTQ people, it's time we took self-empowerment into our own hands and organised organically. The days of the Gay Liberation Front may be gone but the politics of identity, class, liberation and anti-capitalism are alive and well! Such a resistance group is necessary, not to simply fulfil a lingering nostalgia within some of us, but because civil partnerships, gay adoption and all the other landmark achievements of bourgeois equality can be taken from us tomorrow, should our rulers so decide. Moreover, we can't simply use such limited achievements as civil partnerships as the benchmark by which we measure success – our aim is not to be equal to all heterosexuals, nor to aspire to be the next openly gay celebrity/boss/politician. Our aim is freedom for all the working class, and in that fight we must also celebrate our own distinctive values as the LGBTQ community. If we organise now we can fight for a world where sexuality and gender are of little concern, but in the pursuit of that society we must never forget that our class is the backbone of the fight!

'Our aim is freedom, and in that fight we must also celebrate our own distinctive values as the LGBTQ community'

As anarchists we have no faith whatsoever in parliamentarians or parliamentary lobby groups to bring us liberation, nor do we have any trust in our bosses to protect us at work. To combat homophobia we must understand where it stems from, and as anarchists we recognise the flawed logic in asking those who rule us, divide us and trample on our right to sexual freedom whenever they like, to give us liberation. Liberation will not be given by the bosses, but will come about when working-class people of all genders, sexualities and colours seek empowerment and begin to realise that homophobia and sexism (not to mention economic recessions, crap wages and poverty!) are all part and parcel of the illogical system of capitalism.

We can do without bourgeois equality, thanks. We demand real liberation!

I can't believe it's not Stalinism!

If you've got enough of an interest in anarchist ideas to be reading this article, you'll probably agree that capitalism's pretty horrible and it'd be good if we could get rid of it and replace it with something better. However, the problem is that organising for a revolution is hard work, and as people from Spartacus down to Alexandros Grigoropoulos have found, it can be pretty dangerous as well. For these reasons, a lot of people have been tempted to seek cop-outs to avoid the hassle of actually throwing themselves into the class struggle. For most of the 20th century, the Soviet Union offered a very tempting option for people who hated capitalism; instead of actually fighting to liberate themselves and the people around them, they could just support the USSR and the other 'communist' powers every time they got into a war, and have faith that, at some point in the future, the iron laws of the dialectic would mean that the USSR's dictators would lead us all to a glorious future of peace, equality and justice. The Comintern-aligned communist parties were the main tendency promoting this idea, but other kinds of Leninists peddled it as well: orthodox Trotskyists would defend regimes that shot Trotskyists as being somehow progressive, while those who didn't care for Russia itself could pick China, Cuba, Yugoslavia or some other dictatorship as being the true beacon of socialism. Luckily for all of us, history didn't work out quite like the Marxist-Leninists planned and the disgusting set of ruling class ideas that called itself 'communism' was fatally discredited when the workers of eastern Europe rose up and chucked out the regimes that claimed to rule in their name. Since

then, we've seen a slow but steady revival of the class struggle and interest in anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas. Despite all this, there are still people who'd like to see a better world, but don't trust the ability of ordinary people to make it for themselves. Here's a brief look at a few of the messiahs the left puts its faith in today.

Hugo Chávez

Chávez's regime has some obvious attractions for today's wannabe-Stalinist. Chávez says all the right things about solidarity and revolution: he speaks Spanish, which always makes anyone sound cooler; he lives a bit near the place Che came from, which is good for extra trendy lefty points; and he does undeniably have some impressive social programmes. Perfect, right? Sadly, not quite. For all the rhetoric, Venezuela is still a country where the mass of the population have little or no control over their lives, as a recent interview with Venezuelan libertarians showed[1]. Power is not in the hands of 'the people', it is in the hands of Chávez and those around him, and so no matter what concessions the government gives to the working class, they can still be taken back at any time. The Venezuelan authorities, like any other state, won't hesitate to attack workers who go too far and ask for too much, as we saw when the National Guard and police attacked striking steel workers in March 2008[2]. When the Venezuelan state uses its power against demonstrators and striking workers, it's impossible to avoid the old question, which side are you on?

The point isn't whether Chávez is a good or a bad leader, or even if he's a good person: I've never met him, so for all I know he could be a perfectly nice, sincere bloke with a genuine desire to make life better for ordinary people in Venezuela. The point is that his entire project of gaining power through the electoral system, a system designed by the ruling class to defend their position is a totally flawed one that can never deliver real change for the mass of working class people. That'll take a revolution, which would have to be not just against the multinational corporations and the old elite, but also against Chávez and his bureaucratic hangers-on.

The Labour left

This isn't so much a new delusion, more an old one that's grown more and more obviously crazy as time goes by. Back in the 80s when people like Tony Benn used to stomp

around making noises about workers' control and nuclear disarmament, you could kind of understand why some otherwise rational people thought it would be possible to change society through the Labour Party. But today, everyone with a shred of decency has abandoned the party. The cynical politicians who are left don't even pretend to care about us anymore – and yet people like the Labour Representation Committee still cling onto their illusions in it, insisting that Ken Livingstone or John McDonnell will 'reclaim' the party for socialist values any day now. This particular form of wishful thinking is particularly common among union leaders, who will explain to 'their' members again and again that we have to put up with whatever attacks the Labour Party makes on us and not fight back, otherwise the Tories might get in and make exactly the same attacks on us. Anarchists often take the piss out of religious people, and rightly so, but I can't help thinking that Christians who believe that Jesus walked on water and rose from the dead, or Muslims who believe that Allah will send you to burn in hell forever if you eat pork, seem positively logical and rational compared to the kind of lefties who still believe that the Labour Party is going to start standing up for workers one day.

Islamic fundamentalists

This seems even more bizarre than most of the others on the list. Most of the other heroes of today's left at least talk like they want to make the world a better place, but Islamists openly admit how reactionary and undemocratic they are. But despite this, the SWP and others in the 'anti-war' and Palestine solidarity movements carry on sucking up to Hamas, the Iranian theocracy, Hezbollah and various other religious nutters, because they really, really hate America, so that means they must be good, right? After the end of the Cold War, the US ruling class eventually settled on Islamic fundamentalism as their new bogeyman, so it's hardly surprising that some of the 'anti-imperialists' who used to cheer on Stalinists switched their support to the new evil empire. Supporting Islamists doesn't necessarily mean that lefties will jump up and down with pom-poms chanting 'Ooh, Hezbollah, you so fine, you so fine you blow my mind'; it can take more subtle forms, such as when the self-appointed 'leaders' of our movements decide that they have the right to say what slogans we can and can't use, so that criticising the British, Israeli and American states is fine, but criticising the equally brutal thugs running the Iranian state, or hoping to run a Palestinian one, isn't. Watching the contortions socialists twist themselves into as they explain that of course they oppose Hamas, it's just that they don't think anyone should be allowed to openly criticise Hamas in public, would be hilarious if it wasn't so tragic.

One explanation as to why lefties are so willing to support maniacs who openly oppose everything the left stands for might lie in the sense of powerlessness that many of us feel. The government has shown, time and time again, that they don't listen to protest, which has left many people in the anti-war movement wondering what the point of the endless Stop the War marches are, and when genuinely effective direct action does take place, politicos like George Galloway and their supporters are too worried about looking Respect-able and mainstream to get involved. When Islamist 'resistance' fighters blow up Israeli conscripts and civilians (or British and American working class kids who signed up for one of the few stable jobs our failing economy can still offer), they definitely seem to be doing something, in contrast to the impotence of liberal protest here, and so keffiyah-wearing lefties who line up alongside them (metaphorically, of course – it's noticeable how none of the trots who proclaim their 'military support' for Hamas are prepared to go over there and offer them any *actual* military support) can feel like they're doing something too.

The US Army

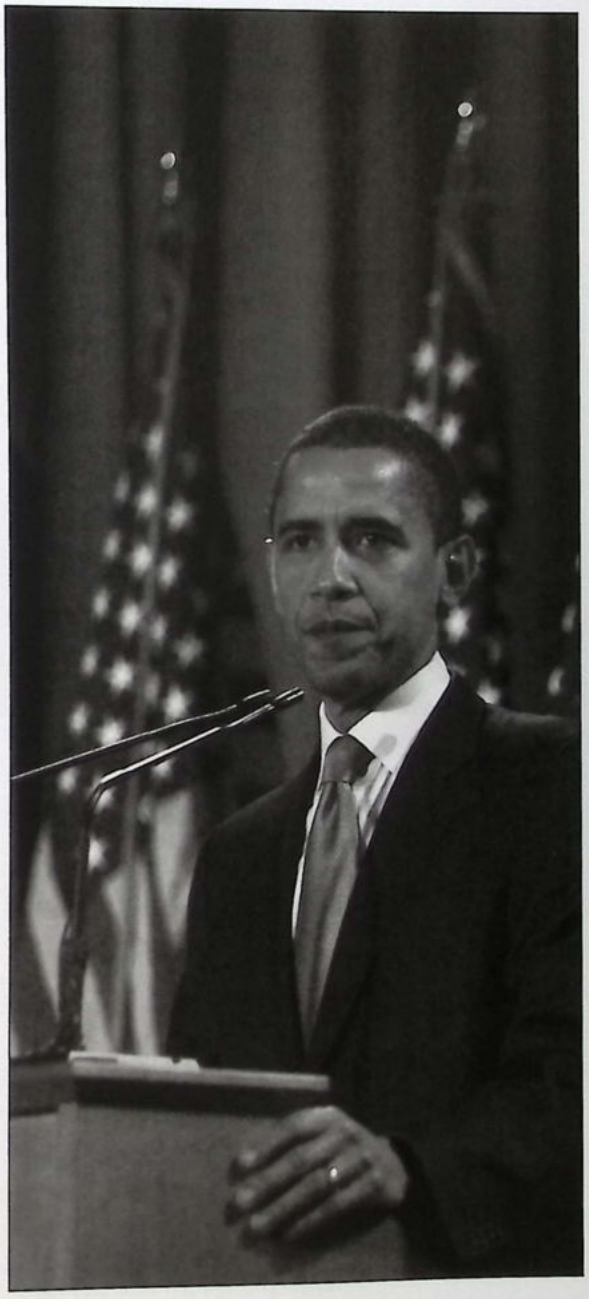
The other side of the coin to supporting anyone who opposes 'Western imperialism' is the equally muddle-headed idea of supporting anyone who opposes 'Islamofascism'. It's noticeable how many ex-Leninists were among the main supporters of the Iraq war, so former Stalinists like Jack Straw, Peter Mandelson and David Aaronovitch could join hands with Trotskyists like Christopher Hitchens in cheering on the forces of the empire. In contrast to the other tendencies, who at least want to try building a mass

movement in support of their chosen leaders, the liberal-lefties who think you can spread freedom with tanks and fighter planes are more openly elitist, and happy to be completely irrelevant to ordinary people as long as they can influence politicians and Guardian journos. This confused lot have got quieter over the last few years as the complete disaster of the Iraq war became more and more obviously indefensible, but it's possible that we may see a re-emergence of them soon, now that Barack Obama has become the friendly, likeable face of imperial power.

Barack Obama

While we're on the subject, it may be worth saying a few words about Obama himself. Yes it is undeniably impressive that a country with such a huge history of systematic racism has reached the point where it's possible for a black man to gain such a position, but that change didn't come about because of Obama or his campaign team, it came about as the result of years and years of struggle by millions of grassroots activists, and we can only imagine how much more progress could've been made if all the energy that was poured into campaigning for Obama had been put into building up community and workplace self-organisation instead. Anyone who believes that individual members of oppressed groups joining the ruling elite will make life better for the rest of that group should ask themselves how much better life was for ordinary working class women at the end of a decade of Maggie Thatcher's rule.

The Democrats emerged as the party of those sections of the American elite that wanted to keep slavery, and



'Obama might offer us a slightly larger slice of cake, but we still want the whole bakery'

while its specific policies may have changed, its basic role remains the same: to represent the sections of the ruling class that don't think the Republicans are doing a good enough job, not to provide any kind of real opposition. So, while Obama might be willing to take some individual steps to make life more bearable for the great mass of the population and reflect the widespread rage at overpaid bankers, his main priority is actually to prevent any kind of real change from happening. Obama might offer us a slightly larger slice of cake, but we still want the whole bakery.

So, where does all this leave us? If the Labour left is a mysterious creature that only appears when union leaders need to explain away their betrayals, the Islamist guerrillas don't even pretend to be on the same side as us, and neither Barack Obama nor Hugo Chávez is going to save the world, does this mean we need to give up all hope? Of course not. The power to change the world isn't in any of these people; it's in us, and the people around us. It's only when we reject all leaders, whether they're 'progressive' politicians or 'resistance' warlords, and start talking to our workmates, neighbours, family and friends that we can start actually building up the kind of forces we need to take back control over our lives. It'll be hard and it'll take time, but it's a lot more rewarding and worthwhile than waiting around for some saviour to give us our freedom.

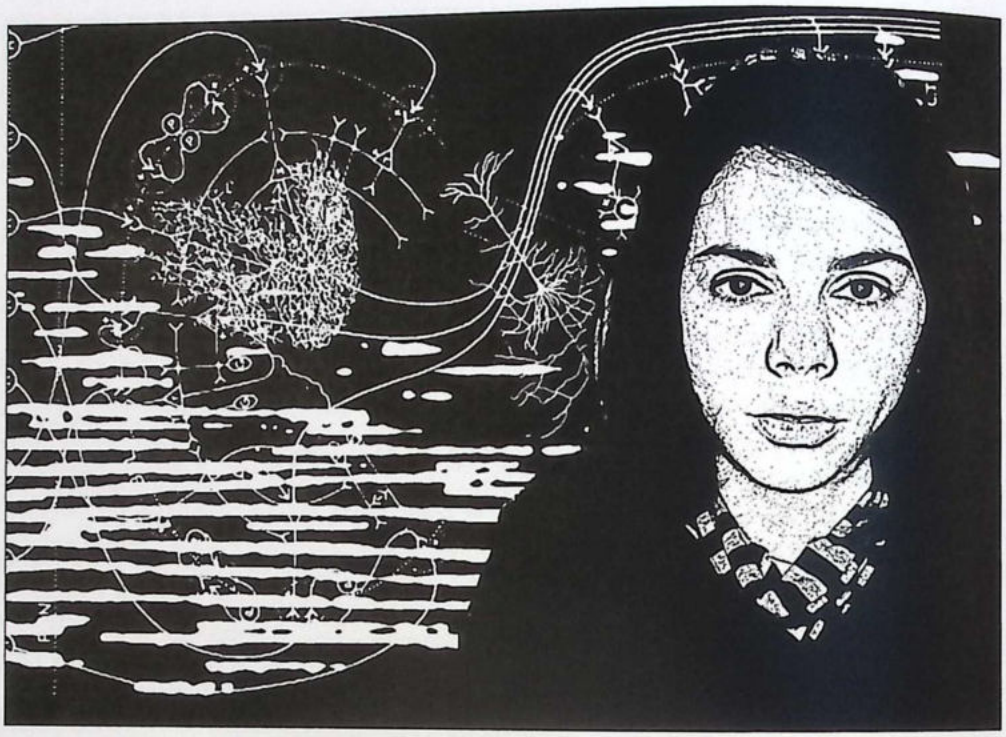
Footnotes:

1 The revolution delayed: 10 years of Hugo Chávez's rule – Charles Reeve and El Libertario: tinyurl.com/djlhk3

2 Steel workers' strike in Venezuela attacked by Chávez' state – Internacionalismo: tinyurl.com/cdkjgd

Searching out difference –

Neuromyths and neurosexism



Anarchist communists believe in an egalitarian society, where people are no longer judged on differences in ability and are no more or less entitled to the benefits from our collective society. As long as it is not used to discriminate, we just don't see difference as a problem. But could this make us insensitive to scientific claims about the discovery of innate differences between men and women, or do these claims need to be better understood, and challenged by non-experts?

Over the last couple of decades, intense interest in brain research, including the 1990s 'Decade of the Brain', has helped bring together many different fields of scientific enquiry, especially biology with psychology. From biology, the physical structure of animal and human brains and their electrical and chemical processes are better understood than ever. Computer imaging like MRI scans, as used in medicine, are being applied to find out how brains change when people perform basic tasks with words or pictures. Animal and human behaviours, and theories of the mind from psychology, can now be put to the test by looking for variations in chemistry, electrical activity or blood flow in the brain. Some of these experiments have been directed at searching for differences between the sexes and factors that might be related to sexuality. Where differences have been detected, it is tempting to feel that we are nearer the truth than ever.

On the other hand, we know that scientific enquiry can so easily be used to back up prejudice. In the 19th century almost all scientists believed that people of colour and women were intellectually inferior to men and this just needed proving. An experiment with brain size by anthropologist and craniologist Paul Broca, performed by filling up skulls with seeds and measuring the difference in volume, would do nicely. Since the female brains were on average 10% lighter that the males', this proved a lack of the region of the brain where the intellect was located! Most notoriously, in 1879 Gustav Le Bon used these results to compare the brain size of women unfavourably with those of gorillas, children and "savages", using this as good reason why women should not be educated. By 1909, it was clear that brain size was really just a reflection of body size. Never mind that any connection between brain size and intellect is a fantasy. Never mind that even the figure of 10% from original data is questionable due to age, disease, and other effects on body growth not being controlled (most of the women in the original experiments were older than the men, and brains can shrink with age-related degenerative diseases). Apart from size, supposed differences in the number of folds on the surface of one part of the brain showed women's inferiority; then, in 1909, it was shown that there was no difference. The story goes on and on, with differences in variability of brains being used to show male superiority – men were less "average" than women, an idea that carried over into the IQ tests of the 1970s. A similar story from the 19th century can be told about the linking of left-handedness to criminality, and incidentally, the possibility of brain abnormality causing criminal behaviour was investigated only as long ago as 1997 to try and explain Ulrike Meinhoff's 'slide into terror' as a member of Red Army Faction - her brain had been preserved for 26 years, then given to a neurologist!

Over many decades, genetics has provided insight into sex differences at a molecular level. Before discovery of DNA, it was already understood that certain diseases are inherited

differently by male and female children. This is described in terms of passing on chromosomes, DNA sections of a person's entire genome that are present in cells of the body. Most cells have all the chromosomes, but sperm and eggs have only one of either sex chromosome, X or Y. When the egg and sperm come together, the foetus' cells become either XX (female) or XY (male). This is not always the case, though, and some people have XXY, XXXY, XYY, although having a Y is usually necessary to give you balls, so to speak (apart from the rare 'XX male' condition where the relevant SRY gene from Y jumps to the X). It becomes more complex still. Hormones are involved with a chain of events that activates a male baby's SRY gene and results in him growing testes. Some of the same hormones, and others, are involved continually after birth. These levels of so-called male and female sex hormones in the body are not static over time or age. For example, testosterone is thought of as the male hormone, but many women have higher levels than men. Levels change over a woman's menstrual cycle and with age. Coming sexually aroused makes hormone levels go up temporarily, and so on. A lot more is now known about how the brain takes part in processes involving hormones. For example, some receptors in the brain respond to hormones from other parts of the body. Interestingly, most testosterone has to be converted to oestrogen (a so-called female sex hormone) before it is received by the brain, so the actual effect of hormones on the brain is very similar in men and women.

With all this knowledge, it would be nice to think things have changed in the 21st century from the days of Gustav Le Bon, but it seems that sexism is alive and kicking, and we can now talk reasonably about neurosexism. Books entitled 'The Female Brain' and ideas of left-brain versus right-brain types of people are now part of popular culture. They use a mixture of science and myth to explain why women don't get so bored when ironing, why working women inevitably get confused juggling work and home life, can't fly planes safely and so on. Many of these ideas have some origin in scientific experiments which attempt to measure hormone or brain activity levels. When a difference is found, explanations about innate, 'hard-wired' behaviours are usually offered. More ludicrously, origins of these behaviours within our evolutionary past are explained using theories about the way early 'hunter gatherer' societies could have been structured. For example, you obviously need a different brain to go hunting, an unpredictable activity, than to find nuts and grubs, or stay at home cleaning the cave, don't you? These kinds of stories are woven from studies of "primitive" tribes living now, since the fossil record tells us so little. One brilliant example of the kind of madness coming out of the field of 'evolutionary psychology' is a study claiming to explain why girls prefer pink, since prehistoric gathering required identifying pink berries, apparently. Never mind that the study on 21st century twenty-somethings only asked about preference and not ability to distinguish colours, you only have to go back to 1914-18 to find magazines saying things like: "There has been a great diversity of opinion on the subject, but the generally accepted rule is pink for the boy and blue for the girl. The reason is that

pink being a more decided and stronger color is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." (Ladies Home Journal, 1918). Pink for girls came in the 1940s. Oops, so much for the prehistoric berry theory then.

For another example of neurosexism, let's look at the idea of spatial awareness differences between genders, arising from psychology experiments where people sit down to look at and compare shapes, or locate objects on a page. Rats running around and getting lost in mazes have also been studied. These experiments have arguably shown some differences between sexes, and it is from these that popular books back up their just-so stories, like why women can't read maps or park cars as well as men. Still, a difference is a difference, right? Not quite. Aside from the possibility of different life-experiences, what was once thought of as better general spatial awareness in men is now known to be much more complicated. With further research, on average, women seem to be better at some spatial tests than men and vice versa. So, was it that the definition of "spatial" was not well enough defined, or is there not really so much difference? The goal posts move yet again. Neuroscientists also claim that there are different "thinking styles" in men and women, or in homosexual and heterosexual people.

Now bring in the hormone levels and MRI scans. People doing spatial or other cognitive tests (visual, audio or language tasks) have hormone levels measured in their blood, saliva or urine. Can a difference in hormone level be related to their ability to perform the

task? Bizarrely, in some tests men with higher hormone levels do worse than other men, but women with higher than average hormone levels do better! So is there really a causal link between hormones and spatial test results, or was is just due to individuals having spent more playing with lego as children? As with hormone levels, studies with MRI scans claim to have shown differences between men and women in the way particular volumes of the brain have greater or less blood flow when doing a task. Recently, though, it seems that many of these differences go away when the experiments are done properly. In spite of early experiments to the contrary, MRI now provides evidence against both localisation (psychological events relating only to defined locations in the brain), and lateralisation (psychological events relating mainly to only one side of the brain). This of course puts, or should put, into question previous experiments that purport to show innate and permanent differences between men and women. Unfortunately, these neuromyths are hanging on so strongly and are now so pervasive in society that educationalists are starting to worry that learning in schools will be affected by this assumed knowledge with little scientific basis.

One example of how things can come unstuck was a study of gender identity in girls with a condition called adrenal hyperplasia, who have masculinised genitals. Data came from asking their mothers about behaviour that was compared to a sister without the condition. Results of one study showed evidence of increased energetic play, or "romping", which is normally attributed to boys. Quite apart from the possibility of mothers treating sisters differently, or typecasting gender behaviours, the killer blow came in a later study comparing children with adrenal hyperplasia and those with diabetes. Both groups were found to exhibit the energetic behaviour, suggesting that childhood illness in general was the common factor, nothing to do with gender identity. But without this last study to show otherwise, how many of us would continue to believe the gender identity theory?

So, as revolutionaries, we have to be careful not to fall into the neuromyth trap. The assumed "facts" about difference gleaned from scientific experiments have to be understood in greater depth and broken down before taking any media headline even slightly seriously. Was the experiment just a psychology experiment asking a bunch of student volunteers to look at pictures, or did it involve some measurement of hormones or brain activity? How was the hormone level measured, and was menstrual cycle taken into account? Was the experiment done on rats where the results may or may not apply to humans? Could the results have an environmental origin, as in the example above? Does a scientist doing a psychology experiment really have the expertise to make claims about hormone levels or judge theories about prehistoric society, or are they making connections that are just not there, based on prejudice? Do they perhaps want it to be true, like Simon Le Vay who hoped his (flawed) experiments showing brain differences between homo- and heterosexuals could help lesbian and gay men become more accepted? Are they even a racist like James Watson, one of the co-discoverers of DNA who got a Nobel prize? (Rosalind Franklin, the woman on the research team, didn't, by the way!) This is not to say it's easy to get to the bottom of media headlines about gay-genes or female brains, especially as the details of the experiments are buried in scientific journals that you have to pay for unless you study or work in a university.

Finally, here are two things that often get left out of discussions about innate abilities or behaviour. Firstly, we know that it is possible to change our ability by practising a task or change behaviour by learning to think differently. It may take a few hours or days or years, but we know we get better over time when we practise something, the opposite if we don't. One practised individual can easily overcome small differences in averages between experimental groups of men/women or gay/straight (assuming these differences exist at all). So to a great extent we can just choose what to become good at, given the opportunity. Secondly, in spite of inequality in upbringing, education and diet, cultural diversity, and discrimination due to racism, sexism and homophobia, the amazing thing about human beings is the overriding similarity in so many of our abilities and capabilities. How much more will this be so when inequalities are removed as they would be in an anarchist communist society?

The main sources for this article were:

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Gendered Language in Ursula Le Guin's Gethen Stories

Science Fiction is at its best when it explores everyday human problems and prejudices through their extrapolation into extreme scenarios; disasters show the best and worst sides of humanity, while dystopias explore the full implications of the political and social impulses that govern us. More unusual, subtler and equally effective, is SF that explores aspects of humanity through their absence. While utopias eradicate society's problems and dystopias exaggerate them, Le Guin creates, from scratch, ambiguous societies of human aliens who have never experienced problems central to our particular brand of humanity, extrapolates a culture, history and mythology from the inherent differences in socialisation, and goes on to explore the problems that they do have.

With Gethen, Le Guin challenges our world's social construction of gender and explores its fundamental influence on our notions of identity by creating a world of human hermaphrodites. Unlike us (but in common with most other mammals) they have an oestrus cycle, so that they are only sexually active for a few days each month (known as "kemmer"). A Gethenian may enter this state as male or female, depending on many factors beyond their control, including the state of those kemmering close to them at the time. If a Gethenian conceives, "she" remains female throughout pregnancy and lactation, then returns to a state of "somer" and could be male next kemmer. In somer, Gethenians are without sexual drive and physically androgynous.

Ursula Le Guin

This biological and sociological re-imagining of sex brings with it the problem of writing a genderless society in a language that is not equipped to describe genderlessness, for an audience barely equipped to imagine it. The linguistic problem exacerbates the perceptual one, and Le Guin has dealt with this in various ways, with varying degrees of success. Initially, she uses masculine pronouns as neutral – or, at least, views Gethen through a human male character who does so, in the novel The Left Hand of Darkness (1969). Shortly before this she had published a short story set on Gethen, but had not been aware at the time of the Gethenians' unusual physiology. She re-wrote this story, Winter's King, for a 1975 collection, this time using feminine pronouns for all characters while keeping the masculine titles of "King" and "Lord" to retain ambiguity. Eventually, with such deft linguistic gymnastics that the casual reader barely notices, she wrote a Gethen story eschewing the use of gendered pronouns altogether, Coming of Age in Karhide (1995). I'll talk first about The Left Hand of Darkness, since this is the first Gethen story that Le Guin wrote with the deliberate intention of making Gethen a world of androgynes. It is not, primarily, a story about gender. It is a story about the politics of small nations, in which a naive envoy from the Ekumen (a sort of research collective of inhabited worlds) is manipulated by factions from rival countries. It is also a story about survival in harsh conditions, and the relationships formed under those conditions. Suspicion and trust, exposure and

'Le Guin challenges our world's social construction of gender and explores its fundamental influence on our notions of identity by creating a world of human hermaphrodites.'

shelter, solitude and companionship are woven in with themes of duality and oneness, reflected in the envoy Genly Ai's (and the reader's) perception of gender as binary, and its contrast in Gethenian sexuality and psychology.

Genly Ai, a Terran and a man, finds it difficult to treat Gethenians as genderless. Early on, he says:

"I was still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own."

His difficulty reflects the reader's, which is made all the more problematic by Le Guin's (or Ai's) use of those masculine pronouns. Le Guin has spoken of regretting this decision, and in her introduction to the re-working of Winter's King she says: "In the third person singular, the English generic pronoun is the same as the masculine pronoun. A fact worth reflecting upon. And it's a trap, with no way out, because the exclusion of the feminine (she) and the neuter (it) from the generic/masculine (he) makes the use of either of them more specific, more unjust, as it were, than the use of "he". And I find made-up pronouns, "te" and "heshe" and so on, dreary and annoying."

While the decision to use masculine pronouns in LHoD is a submission to that trap, forcing the reader to perceive Gethen as a planet without women, it has another, stranger effect: it makes us actively fight that perception, to try to see the neutral as feminine as well as masculine. It also allows us to feel lulled into a sense of understanding the genderlessness on our own terms, before shocking us with startling incongruities such as: "The King was pregnant" (p. 73).

Like Ai, we force ourselves to view each character, by turns, as both male and female. Often, of course, the language (and our own cultural identification) forces us to view important and recurring characters as male, and this prejudice is used narratively – Ai's mistrust of Estraven, his major ally in Karhide, springs from his inability to read "him", to work out his motives and goals, and he especially hates the characteristics he perceives as feminine, dismissing subtle warnings and cautions as "effeminate deviousness" (p.17). Ai's unconscious, internalised gender prejudices are dangerously irrelevant on Gethen, and only when Estraven kemmers as female does he realise how great his mistake was. He has been judging Estraven according to his expectations of male behaviours, misreading a protective and loyal ally as a manipulative politician, with a mistrust coming partly from Estraven's aloofness and stringent observation of shifgrether (a system of status and etiquette that equates openly offering advice with dire insult), but mainly from Ai's inability to see him as both a man and a woman and neither.

This cultural confusion extends to Ai's and previous Ekumen investigators' view of Gethenian culture and history. We are told that there has never been a full-blown war on Gethen, yet the feuding nations that we see – a paranoid monarchy with a mad king, and an authoritarian communist state with forced labour camps – are far from utopian. The nation of Karhide is described early on as "not a nation but a family squabble" (p.12). Ai speculates that Gethenians, while capable of the same aggression and cruelty as other humans, lack the capacity to mobilise. He says, with characteristic simplicity: "They behaved like animals in that respect; or like women. They did not behave like men, or ants." (p.39) An account from an earlier Ekumen investigator theorises that the Ancient Hainish (who seeded all human-inhabited worlds) created Gethenians as a genetic experiment with the deliberate aim of eliminating war:

"Did the Ancient Hainish postulate that continuous sexual capacity and organized social aggression, neither of which are attributes of any mammal but man, are cause and effect? Or [...] did they consider war to be a purely masculine displacement-activity, a vast Rape, and therefore in their experiment eliminate the masculinity that rapes and the femininity that is raped?"

This hypothesis does not go unchallenged, though. In the grip of a long ice age, Gethen is known to the rest of the Ekumen worlds as "Winter"; cold and starvation have had as much influence on the moulding of Gethenian society as has genderlessness, and which of these forces are responsible for Gethen's unique characteristics, we are left to guess.

The same researcher speculates that the lack of sexual frustration or competition (since all are released from other duties for kemmer, and nobody is barred from the kemmerhouse) dulls ambition and slows technological progress, but again this is left open to the possibility that survival of the intense cold is a factor. Technological progress happens

slowly and steadily on Gethen. Large communal buildings stand for thousands of years, being repaired rather than demolished and replaced. Their greatest technological marvel is a highly efficient camping stove that can heat a tent for months on a single fuelling, but they have very few powered vehicles and no flight (with no flying animals to inspire it). Resources are not wasted on anything but food and warmth. Travel is undertaken on foot, or by catching a supply vehicle headed in the same direction. Gethenians don't rush to reach any destination, physical or technological – they get where they're going without hurrying. Even the perilous journey across the ice that constitutes the second half of the story, compelled as it is by the need to arrive before supplies run out, is slow-paced and careful, with more development of character and setting than action or plot. Despite the lack of pace, the novel makes gripping reading. Each new discovery about the nature of Gethenian physiology and society, each shift of perception in the complex relationship between friends and aliens, every unexpected word and phrase connects theme to plot to character, and these quiet, thoughtful interactions are more riveting than any hectic chase over thin ice.

The revised Winter's King demonstrates the reasons why Le Guin chose not to use feminine pronouns as neutral in The Left Hand of Darkness. Not only is the feminine more specific, but instead of giving the impression of a planet without men (as the opposite tactic implied the absence of women) it seems to suggest only that the characters important enough to have their movements described – the King, the palace officials and politicians – are female, while those mentioned too briefly for a pronoun to be necessary (staff and subjects) remain male by default. Because the use of the feminine rather than the masculine is being reconsidered, the neutral escapes consideration altogether. As in LHoD, the reader struggles against these perceptions, as King Argaven struggles against the mindforming aimed at manipulating her rule, but it is a harder struggle to see she as neutral than he, and the overall effect is not of androgynes but of a world ruled by women using masculine titles. It is a good antidote to the use of male as neutral, a challenge to the reader's perceptions and the writer's skill at manipulating them, but since the aliens' sexual difference to Gethenians isn't made explicit until two thirds of the way through the story, there is no real sense of androgyny in the characters. That said, the failure at androgyny leads, at least, to seeing more women than men, which is unusual enough to be worth the experiment.

The story, remaining relatively unchanged from its original version, has echoes of Semley's Necklace in its concern with the incongruities of time and long distance space travel, but is most interesting for what it tells us about the Gethenian techniques of brainwashing – which they call "mindforming" and the Hainish "mindscience". This is a huge contrast from the Foretelling of the Handdara, the more spiritually-inclined (yet still scientifically founded) psychic ability glimpsed in the other Gethen stories, and may go some way towards explaining why so many of the kings of Karhide are completely insane.

In contrast to both previous stories, Coming of Age in Karhide has no kings or politicians and is set amongst working people in an ordinary Hearth (a communal dwelling of around 200 people). This is a return to Gethen after around 25 years, for both for the writer and the planet. Le Guin chooses a completely different voice for this story: an open and intelligent Gethenian narrator looking back, with honesty and humour, on the experiences of adolescence. Since the narrator is using personal experience, and speaking in the first person, there is little need for gendered pronouns, and where other characters are spoken of they are either mentioned by name or cunningly pluralised to evade gendered pronouns, save for explicit uses to describe kemmering status. This careful consideration of language provides a very different viewpoint to previous Gethen stories, but nevertheless the characters emerge from the page gendered, perhaps more readily so as the reader has no consciously inappropriate gendered pronouns to challenge. The narrator, Sov, by intimately describing of the aches, pains, clumsiness and shame of puberty, including the first experience of menstruation, cannot help but come over as female, especially since we are left to hear all the anxieties regarding uncontrollable urges and awkward erections from Sov's taller, moodier friend Sether. Their conversation, though they are comparing and confirming symptoms that they are both experiencing, reads like a girl and a boy talking, her with shyness and gentle reassurance, him with angry, humiliated outbursts at the unfairness and inhumanity of it all.

The whispered fears of the two

adolescents include losing control in kemmer and committing rape, putting in doubt the Ekumen investigator's assertion that rape is a physical impossibility for Gethenians – never that convincing, since we know from LHoD that drugs exist to stimulate or suppress kemmer, and are used by government agents in Orgoreyn to seduce spies and pacify prisoners. Sether relates a friend-of-a-friend story about a rape that took place when two truck drivers were cut off by snow and one kemmered as male. Sov is shocked, never having heard such things were possible. The story might be an exaggeration, as adolescent rumours about sex so often are, but it seems more likely that such incidents are taboo and that an alien researcher would have had difficulty uncovering them.

This fear of being made inhuman by kemmer may be due, in part, to the characters' awareness of aliens and of their own uniqueness amongst other human races; they are afraid of the animalistic qualities of the kemmer cycle, that it will be like going into heat or rut, while also ashamed that, in kemmer, they become more like the grotesque aliens, who they equate with a hormonal imbalance towards male or female that causes some Gethenians to remain in a permanent state of kemmer. These people are stigmatised as "perverts" and, more tellingly, "half-deads" (indicating, perhaps, that the stigma is not in the permanence of their sexual state but in their lifelong limitation to only one physical sex). We hear of their existence in LHoD, as Genly Ai is often mistaken for one, but hear more in this story of the fear and fascination they evoke in other Gethenians. They are variously

mistrusted and pitied, but not excluded from kemmerhouses – in fact, they often live in and run them, this being one of the few roles Gethenian society deems acceptable for those whose identity and sexuality are so conflated.

These various viewpoints, with their linguistic limitations, may not quite allow us to see genderlessness as the Gethenians do, but they do allow for some striking observations that can shock us out of assumptions we didn't realise we were making. One of the best is this advice from an early Ekumen investigator on Gethen:

"The First Mobile, if one is sent, must be warned that unless he is very self-assured, or senile, his pride will suffer. A man wants his virility regarded, a woman wants her femininity appreciated, however indirect and subtle the indications of regard and appreciation. On Winter they will not exist. One is respected and judged only as a human being. It is an appalling experience."

It is both amusing and uncomfortable to be reminded how much we have invested in gender identity, and how manipulatively seductive those heteronormative and patriarchal behaviours can be, even to those directly harmed by them. While it is tempting for any anarchist, feminist or LGBT activist to see a world lacking gender divisions as a form of utopia, Le Guin's transitions to alternative societies are never that simple – there are no utopias, and the removal of one fundamental source of privilege on our world provides no easy answer to all the rest. The binary division of society into male and female is not replaced by another single, overwhelming binary, but by a multitude of smaller systems of status and hierarchy, shifgrethor being the most visible of these, stigmatisation of a sexual minority the most familiar. Le Guin uses Gethen not to answer the problem of gender but to provoke further questions on the nature of identity and prejudice. When Ai asks Estraven if Gethenians are as obsessed with wholeness as Terrans with duality, he replies: "We are dualists too. Duality is an essential, isn't it? So long as there is myself and the other." (p.159)

Perhaps we will remain unable to truly deconstruct gender until we can deconstruct the language that we use to reinforce it every day. Dreary and annoying as those replacement pronouns may be, perhaps a story using the Gethenian pronouns (whose existence is implied in LHoD) to describe those in somer, those in kemmer as female, those in kemmer as male, female animals, male animals and (prusumably) inanimate objects would better portray the people of Gethen, and I would love to see Le Guin take up that experiment.

Which pronouns would better portray the Terrans remains an experiment for us all.

Editions used:

Le Guin, Ursula, The Left Hand of Darkness, 1973 (Panther, Herts.)
Le Guin, Ursula, 'Winter's King', in The Wind's Twelve Quarters, 2000 (Gollancz, London)
Le Guin, Ursula, 'Coming of Age in Karhide', in The Birthday of the World and Other Stories, 2003 (Gollancz, London)

Second Life:

Escape from gender or another form of enslavement?

If you were communicating blindly with someone, as is often the case on the internet, what would you most like to know about the person? What would you most want to communicate about yourself? In other words, what are the significant features of your identity?

In terms of what is socially significant, in the sense that there are important implications for how you are treated in society, then there is a well recognised list: social class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age and disability. These aspects of our social selves will determine to a large extent where we fall in the social hierarchy and what opportunities and chances are open to us. It is envisioned that in a future society all forms of hierarchy and inequality based on any of these things will disappear. There are a number of debates about which is more important, with most class-struggle anarchists stressing the role social class plays as an overarching source of inequality within a capitalist system. Race and ethnicity also feature prominently in political campaigns and struggles, especially with the presence of very public fascist and racist movements and the obvious racial divide in terms of living standards.

Gender inequality has gone from the limelight of political activity since the heyday of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. This is largely due to the fact that women seem to have achieved what they were seeking – they are now politicians, on the board of directors and managers. Girls do better at school than boys and seem to have the opportunities to enter any occupation. On the surface it appears that what was once considered the oldest oppression is much less of an

issue than class and race, at least in western Europe and North America. (Whether this is in fact the case is the subject of another article!)

However, on a personal level, if we return to the question of what we consider to be the most significant aspect of our identity, gender would be the first to come to mind. (Age, sexuality and disability are also significant in this context, especially when related to gender.) Gender is a term used to refer to the social aspect of a particular biological sex. The personal aspect of these social differences makes it less obvious when inequality exists and therefore more difficult to eradicate it, even in a situation of revolutionary transformation. In addition, it is not so much the issue of inequality or oppression that is at stake. Rather it is our own internalised attachment to gender identity and roles. So it is not just a question of men oppressing women, but of both biological sexes being oppressed by the whole concept of gender. We can imagine a society without social class, with no more awareness of race or ethnicity than we have of hair colour now. But can we imagine a future society without gender?

The test of this is to go back to the question asked at the start. What would you want people to know about you? Would you care most if someone mistook your class, race, age, sexuality or gender? People could carry on an internet relationship quite happily without knowing the social class or race of someone, but not knowing the gender of someone is extremely unsettling. It is the first thing parents want to know about the new baby – is it a boy or a girl? On every form asking for personal information, you need to identify yourself as male or female. It might come as a surprise to find that the person you have been talking to all evening is actually a corporate executive, but to think that you could be doing the same with someone who turned out to be male rather than female, or vice

versa, is unthinkable. With the strong gay movement, there has been a considerable change in attitudes towards sexuality. Although we should not underestimate the significance of discrimination according to sexual orientation, it is now common for people to have friendships quite happily with people they 'aren't quite sure about'. The person might be gay or not, but it doesn't matter. However, to carry on a friendship without being able to identify whether the person was male or female would be unheard of.

If we want to abolish all social distinctions in a new society, why not seek to abolish the oldest distinction of them all – the one between male and female? In a future society, won't we all just want to be individuals, unconstrained by the social divisions that would merely be a hangover from an unjust and unequal society? Why should it be important at all whether we are male or female? Neither sex nor reproduction depend on this biological distinction nowadays, so why not purge it from our list of what makes up our identity? What will matter will be the things that are truly important to us: our interests, likes and dislikes, our personalities.

This scenario may seem to be far in the future, but we can see the possibilities already in cyberspace. The internet in many respects abolishes all social distinctions. It is impossible to tell anything about the person apart from what they say about themselves. People develop strong friendships and relationships purely on the basis of a blind conversation that takes place outside of any normal social place in which to situate someone. The most extreme example of such a 'floating', disconnected social space is the computer programme Second Life.

Second Life (SL) is a virtual world that went online in June 2003. It was developed by Philip Rosedale from California. He named the company Linden Lab after the street where he lived. It is significantly more realistic than any of the other virtual worlds or computer games that came before. What makes Second Life different is that Linden lab sculpted only the landscape. Apart from some core elements, such as the Orientation Island for new arrivals, the rest is entirely created by 'residents'. It is based on technology that allows people to actually build things within the landscape. In addition, there are no set activities or things to interact with that aren't the creation of the residents. It is a place where you log on, download an 'avatar' (your SL persona) – and what you do next is completely open-ended. Obviously, those that set up residence in SL now have a whole established world to interact with, one created by avatars who came before. However, you can also start anything of your own. Anarchists could buy some land (in Linden Dollars, although you actually pay real money into a Real Life (RL) account) and set up a new society.

One thing you don't get a choice about when you first enter SL is having a gender. The first choice you have when you download the software is to select whether your avatar is going to be male or female. This indicates how basic gender is to people's identity. Once you have chosen your gender, then your SL body will take on certain characteristics of that gender. For example, a male avatar will automatically sit with his legs further apart than a female one.

Second Life is a place where people go to escape reality. They can be whoever they like. Many feel that it is the one place they can be who they 'really are'. The extent of experimentation with gender identities on SL indicates that gender is one of the things people – both males and females – want to escape from. In RL, gender is closely associated with the body. In SL there are no such limitations. People can choose to be a different gender regardless of what they are in Real Life. In addition, they don't have to disclose to other residents what they are in RL. This opens up a number of possibilities.

The fact that roughly 30% of people on SL have avatars that are a different gender to their RL self is indicative of people's frustration with the constraints of gender in everyday life. Male residents use their avatars to escape from the cult of masculinity in RL. In SL they can express gender-atypical traits that are difficult to express in Real Life. According to one resident:

"SL was really important to me because it gave me the chance to actually try out what I would want to look like if I had a chance to express the transgendered feelings I have. In my first life, if this were a perfect world I'd try and represent more of my personality in the real world. If I did do this it would meet with a lot of criticism. I live in the rural south and even though I love it here, people are too closed-minded. On SL I can look like RuPaul and nobody cares. I can be more like myself."

Others deliberately choose to be a different gender in order to experience what it is like. Interactions in SL are still very gender-stereotyped in many ways (SL is not going to be that different from RL), so going around as a male when you are female in RL, or vice versa, gives the feeling of what it is

like to be that gender. Women comment that by taking on a male identity they become more confident. Though you have to choose a male or female avatar, some residents have transformed their avatar so much that it becomes androgynous. Others take on completely different forms such as animals or robots.

The main reason that people go on SL is to interact with other people. Despite the experimentation with gender-neutral avatars, gender identity remains one of the main bases on which interaction takes place. As SL cannot help but reflect the concerns and interests of those who create it, it is not surprising that sexual relations play a key part in SL activity, despite the lack of real physical contact. To have more 'realistic' sex, you have to actually go and buy genitalia. Some people spend a lot of money doing up their avatar. Virtual sex seems a popular pastime in Second Life. Most of this interaction mirrors society. Many people meet people of the sex they would normally be attracted to in Real Life. Weddings are a common occurrence, with many stories of people going on to meet up in RL and getting married there too. However, the anonymous nature of social interaction means that people use SL as a way of doing things that they have always wanted to do but wouldn't dare. According to Tim Guest in his book Second Lives: 'Many residents see in virtual worlds the seeds of a new kind of utopia: a world free from the dangers of contraception and disease, which recaptures a post-war, pre-AIDS innocence, where gender politics and sexual morality no longer apply.' Though many single people meet up in SL, there are also many other cases where affairs in SL have turned into real-life divorces. For many women stuck at home with the children, SL is a way to escape the drudgery of their lives. In one such case a woman was at home all day with four small children while her husband was out at work. She spent hours every day on SL, living out a completely different existence. Her avatar was an attractive, large-breasted woman dressed in kinky black lace. She had an affair, with a black muscle-bound avatar, that was as stormy as any real-life affair. The affair was in sharp contrast to her marriage. She had trouble going back to RL after her time in SL. When the man broke it off, she was completely traumatised.

The more oppressive side of real-life sexual relations is also reflected in SL. You can go on SL and type in 'sex' and be immediately teleported to areas where anything is on offer: get a prostitute, dance naked in clubs, go to strip-tease joints, rape someone, or watch young girls dance naked and then have sex with them. As all avatars are operated by real people, all those offering their services to be sexually exploited are doing so willingly as part of their avatar's character. Keeping in mind that you can never know the real gender of other avatars, those who are playing these roles could easily be men. This shows that for many people SL is more a way of indulging in the most oppressive forms of sexual relations, practices that they would not dare to do in normal life, than of liberating themselves form gender constraints. Going on Second Life is a bizarre experience. It is difficult to draw conclusions as to its significance for gender relations in a future society. On the one hand, it seems to make people think in completely different ways about gender. We are so used to thinking in terms of being male or female, and being treated by others according to this identity, that to interact with people without knowing 'what' they are could be very liberating. Many people find it very disturbing to not know the real gender identity, especially if they are considering getting involved in a more 'serious' relationship with someone. But should it matter? If you really like someone, then their actual biological sex may not be important. Without bodies getting in the way, human relations can reach a different level, where what counts are the personal characteristics of someone, what they are like on the 'inside'. Living in a world where appearance is everything, such attitudes can seem very refreshing.

Nevertheless, there is something about Second Life that is extremely disturbing. The fact that millions of people spend enormous amounts of time living the life of their avatar has implications for the possibility of social change. There is no doubt that we need to transform society so that we are freed from the limitations of gender, both in terms of how men and women are treated and in our own minds. Second Life can give us a glimpse of what it would be like if gender were not important. Men and women can escape the impact of traditional gender in their lives and redefine who they are.

These changes need to be made in the real world, with real people, and not in a fantasy world. As people's lives become increasingly impoverished, both physically and mentally, there is a real danger that more and more people will disappear into their 'other life' where they don't have these problems. According to Tim Guest,

in an interview with the founder of SL Philip Rosedale: 'Philip decided that what he wanted was not the ability to change the real world, but to conquer it and replace it with something better: a virtual world, with no barrier between thought and action.' As anarchists we are already faced with apathy and defeatism on the part of most people when confronted with the enormity of the task to transform society. This could become worse as virtual society becomes a substitute for real society for more and more people.

With regards to gender, it is clear that stereotyped relations between male and female still predominate in SL. The difference is that the stereotypical avatar is sometimes being operated by the opposite gender. But this doesn't then change anything about relations between male and female if the actions and attitudes are the same. Though Second Life can change people's attitudes in Real Life, any fundamental transformation in gender relations needs to take place in the real world with real people. In addition, it is questionable whether the body really makes no difference to who we are. Second Life is all based on the visual and the imagination. Human beings have real physical bodies and perceive the world through all the senses. Though it seems that being a male or female shouldn't make any difference to anything, it is still uncertain whether people would really want to create a future society that was so gender-neutral that being male or female would play no role one's identity.

Second Life, like science-fiction writing, has the effect of provoking important questions about how we really want to live as human beings. We just need to make sure that it is in this world that we take action.

We are not frightened by ruins

By Jean G. Cozzens

We publish an extract from the Anarchist Federation's work in progress, a new volume in our Anarchist Communist Editions devoted entirely to the relationship between anarchism and art. We talk a lot about 'cultures of resistance' in the Anarchist Federation. It is the purpose of this project to explore just what our modern 'culture of resistance' would look like. Moments of social and collective action—from strikes to revolutions—inspire and provoke emotion as much as they add to the theory and history of our movement.

We invited artists to attempt to capture fragments of these moments of great hope and upheaval and also their desires for a better, freer society. The following contribution was produced by Jean Cozzens a poster designer, screenprinter, and carpenter based in Providence, Rhode Island.

In 2001, I was living in an old mill that was being painstakingly renovated by a group of artist-developers, across the street from a 14-acre tract of factories that were slated to be torn down to make way for a shopping plaza. Across the city, many other factory buildings were being demolished as well, due to neglect, arson, or the desire to make space for new buildings, parking lots, or highways.

I had always been fascinated by old buildings. At the time, in my third year of architecture school, I was becoming more and more frustrated with new construction techniques, and more and more interested in old ways of building. To me, the demolition of the mills was senseless and wasteful: it seemed that it would never again be possible to create buildings that had the quality, aesthetics and strength of the old factories. I knew of no new buildings that were designed with such conscious care, or constructed with materials that were as simple and well crafted. The mills were a valuable and severely limited resource. Why would you destroy something that could never be built again, something that was locally relevant and specific to our city – in favour of making a cheap cookie-cutter replication of a shopping centre that could be found anywhere across the country?

I got involved in the activist struggle to try to save the buildings that were slated for demolition – the first 'activist' project I had felt strongly enough about to really jump into. It saved a couple of the buildings, had definitely raised awareness of the contribution of arts and industry to the city, and had probably pushed the developers to do a little bit better than their banal norm. However, it had not been able to protect any of the messy, useful, inexpensive possibilities that the mills had offered. I began to wonder about the love I had initially felt for the old mills – by focusing on their physical structures, had I been missing what was really important about them?

Even if the mills had been saved and renovated, even if the renovations were to be done by a well-intentioned team of good people (as was happening with the building where I was living), the purposes they could be put to would still be limited: by financial pressure, by the lender banks, by the increased attention they would get, by all the work that would have been put into them and the preciousness that would

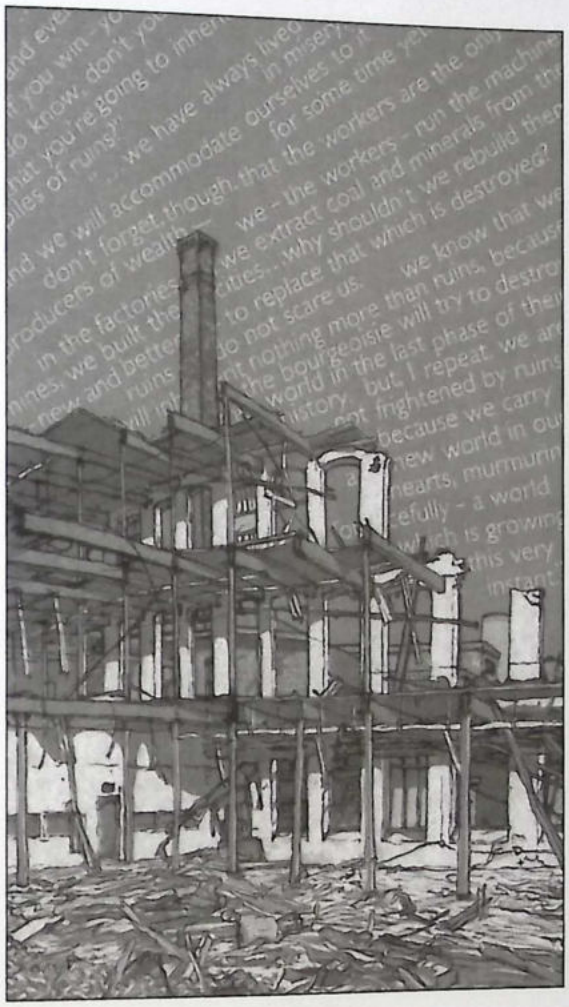
'These sentences from Durruti offered me hope, even after this destruction of space for freedom'

result. The freedom that comes from living or working in a slightly neglected, rough-and-tumble structure would vanish. Whether demolished or converted, the mills would cease to provide space for industry, productive businesses, small entrepreneurship and creative work. Renovation would cast the buildings in amber, preserving them while also freezing their ability to transform, to harbour activity, life, innovation, production, to be messy and changeable.

In one of the books I was reading, I had come across this quotation: "We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts, and that world is growing this minute.

These sentences from Buenaventura Durruti offered me hope for the re-creation of possibilities, the re-opening of the world of action even after this destruction of space for freedom. I had been wanting to make a poster about the mill demolitions, to share my sadness about their loss, and it became clear that the Durruti quote – and the hope it spoke of – belonged on that poster. In February of 2002, on a sunny-but-still-cold day, I found myself sitting outside on a pile of rubble to draw one of the mills in the middle of its destruction… and a couple of days later, realized that I had made the drawing that would go along with Durruti's words.

I worked on the poster off and on through 2007, then printed it in January of 2008 – six years after I had begun it. My thoughts have continued to develop and change, but I find that the quote still speaks to me very



strongly in March 2009, as I print a second run of the posters, a little more than a year later. I continued to live in Providence after I finished architecture school. The city's marketing team focused its 'rebirth' efforts on promoting what a great hub it was for creative people – at the same time as it had its workers shut down independent show spaces, kick artists out of their studios, and scrape screen-printed posters off of the walls. I saw fancy mill renovations continue to push industries and workshops out of their buildings, watched the housing market become absurdly inflated, then witnessed the bubble burst, my neighbourhood hit hard by foreclosures in a flurry of board-ups. Destruction was not only carried out by bulldozers: all the supposedly constructive strategies of modern capitalism seemed intent on 'blasting and ruining' the world that we live in.

Instead of nostalgically recreating old building types, though, we will need to imagine new spaces and develop new methods of construction that will fit us better, that will help foster our changing lives. The right forms for buildings, and the right structures for society, will not come from the drafting table of a single, radically enlightened anarchist architect. We will figure them out together, beginning with how we are living together now, starting from the skills and materials we already know. The vitality of our lives together, and of whatever new society we build, will depend on the fact that our structures and relationships will not ever be fixed into a 'perfect' form, will never be completely known or fully understood. We will always be making new experiments, trying, failing often, succeeding occasionally, learning from our experience, and trying again. At times, we will have to ruin even the structures we create ourselves, whether they are societal or physical, so they do not become petrified and immovable. What I ultimately take from Buenaventura Durruti's words is that we cannot be afraid to dismantle our lives – we must continually un-build and rebuild the various frameworks of our own existence – to keep them flexible, to allow us and our communities to continue to change and grow.

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The Grapes of Wrath

By John Steinbeck
Penguin Books

As harrowing and heartbreaking as a novel can be, The Grapes of Wrath tracks the journey of the Joad family from eastern Oklahoma to California, a voyage made by thousands of Midwestern families during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s in search of a new life and prosperity. Beginning with his release from prison, Tom Joad returns to his uncle's home to find his family packing for California in order to escape the drought and find work. After their journey across half a continent, the Joads arrive in California and are immediately plunged into a world where desperate workers compete in reverse auctions to determine who will work for the lowest wage, often just a few cents a day. Farm conglomerates print off thousands of flyers advertising for workers in order to gain a surplus of interest, and then drastically lower the wage knowing that workers will always stay. Upon moving to a government camp, the family find hope in their new surroundings, a federal-operated camp which is largely run by residents as a collective, but a further move results in them inadvertently working as scabs at an orchard where union organisers are assaulted by business owners and Californian vigilantes.

This wrenching, uneasy story of struggle and toil laid bare the true nature of big business and marked the peak of Steinbeck's literary career. The story is remarkably straightforward in its composition, with chapters forming a neatly consecutive contrast between longer, dialogue-based sections and short periods of blistering social commentary and stinging criticism of the system of agricultural conglomeration, exploitation and ownership. Indeed this simplicity of form creates an effectiveness and power that is at best frightening, and at worst downright traumatising, and Steinbeck's extraordinary talent for reaching into the reader's imagination and creating rich textures enables this conversation-and-commentary style to flow in the most natural manner.

Steinbeck's tale did much to convince native Californians of their unfair treatment and exploitation of migrant labour, but was also demonised nationally as communist and unpatriotic, facing claims of exaggeration and libel from the state and federal executives and business associations. But these accusations, while typical at the time of establishment figures seeking to disparage an opponent, were not entirely untrue. Steinbeck stated in one letter (found in the preface) that, 'Every effort I can bring to bear is and has been at the call of the common working people to the end that they may eat what they raise, use what they produce, and in every way and in completeness share in the works of their hands and their heads.' Further, he was determined to bring the story of migrants he met during the writing of his novel to the attention of the wider American consciousness, where jingoistic pre-war chest-beating was suppressing any and every critical report.

The Grapes of Wrath has remained at the pinnacle of American literature for over seven decades, and is today more vital that ever. The desperation of the Joad family is reflected daily in the lives of eastern European workers in western EU countries, Africans making the perilous journey across the Mediterranean, and Central Americans working on the same Californian farms that formerly employed thousands of Oklahomans. Steinbeck's ambition was to document fully the horrors that migrant workers faced, and he fulfils this completely. The Grapes of Wrath cements his legacy of helping working people 'dream of a dignified and free society in which they can harvest the fruits of their own labour.'

Muzak to my ears: Canned music and class struggle – public space and muzak as policing

Past Tense. £1.00

The pamphlet on Muzak tackles another theme of Past Tense: public space. It describes the role of bland piped music from its origins to the present. Originally it was used to increase productivity in workplaces during World War Two and then began to invade lifts, shops and supermarkets, stations, telephones and open public spaces. "Muzak has been applied at the heart of the two central arenas of modern life: work and leisure. Its initial development as a means of improving workplace productivity led to its later application in the arena of mass consumption. This only reflected capitalism's wider social and economic developments; as rising productivity enabled the greater integration of workers into society as mass consumers, so Muzak then becomes a weapon- alongside advertising – of sales techniques within the shopping environment". A stimulating read on a subject that should not be ignored – the increasing invasion of public space by the market.

We

By Yevgeny Zamyatin
Penguin Books

George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four is without doubt one of the most famous books ever written, seen as the pinnacle of dystopian fiction ahead of Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, and the works of H.G. Wells and Philip K. Dick. Less well known however is Orwell's original inspiration, Yevgeny Zamyatin's We, written as a fictionalisation of Zamyatin's experiences of both the Bolshevik revolution and industrial production on the River Tyne. Those who have already read Nineteen athe plot elements in We: gone are intercontinental Oceania and Big Brother, in their place are the walled city of OneState and the Benefactor, and I-330 replaces Julia as the sexually charged, subversive partner who leads D-503 into confusion, salvation and beyond. In contrast to Winston Smith's lowly job as a administrative clerk for the Ministry of Truth, D-503 is given the lofty role of the chief engineer for the INTEGRAL project, an enormous spacecraft that is to be used for the colonisation of other planets, mirroring the march of modernity and industrialisation undertaken by European colonial powers in the 19th century.

The society of OneState is organised along Fordist, Taylorist and mathematical principles, where maximum industrial and societal efficiency has replaced emotion, individuality and free thought. Thus the book's title is a reference to the dichotomous relationship in OneState between the individual and the state, in which citizens are forced to sacrifice all individual characteristics for the 'We' that is the social body and the state. Indeed social control is practiced to such a degree that citizens, known as Numbers, are given an identifying number, identical uniforms with a number-tag, and a timetable that leaves little time for free, unsanctioned activities. The city itself is constructed almost entirely from glass, allowing maximum surveillance and minimum personal freedom and privacy, resembling the spirit of Jeremy Bentham's radical Panopticon prison design. Moreover, dreams and imagination are prohibited, classified as sicknesses to be cured via lobotomy, perhaps echoing the Foucauldian concepts of the power, knowledge and the medicalisation of insanity, sexuality and behaviour a whole half-century

before Foucault himself.

Zamyatin's writing style is certainly more descriptive and lucid than that of Orwell, taking time to paint a detailed, highly emotive backdrop to each scene. Given the diary-entry nature of We, Zamyatin's writing has much more pace and intensity than Nineteen Eighty-Four's slower, suffocating style that smothers the reader with the aura of totalitarian control that characterises the plot. At times, this pairing of pace and detail can become disorientating, particularly later in the novel when D-503 begins to confuse reality and dream, but overall it is a sharp combination that guarantees an engaging, entertaining read. Written in the early 1920s, We both predates and predicts the horrors of ideology that would define the next 25 years, as well as reflecting late 20th-century debates, particularly from post-modernists such as Foucault and Zygmunt Bauman, on medicalisation, the surveillance state and the pitfalls of modernity. Ultimately, We is a passionate novel that rails against totalitarianism, the extremes of scientific rationality and the suppression of individuality for the sake of ideology.

Rare Doings at Camberwell: radicals, subversion and social control – A short tour through Camberwells's underground history

Past Tense. £1.50

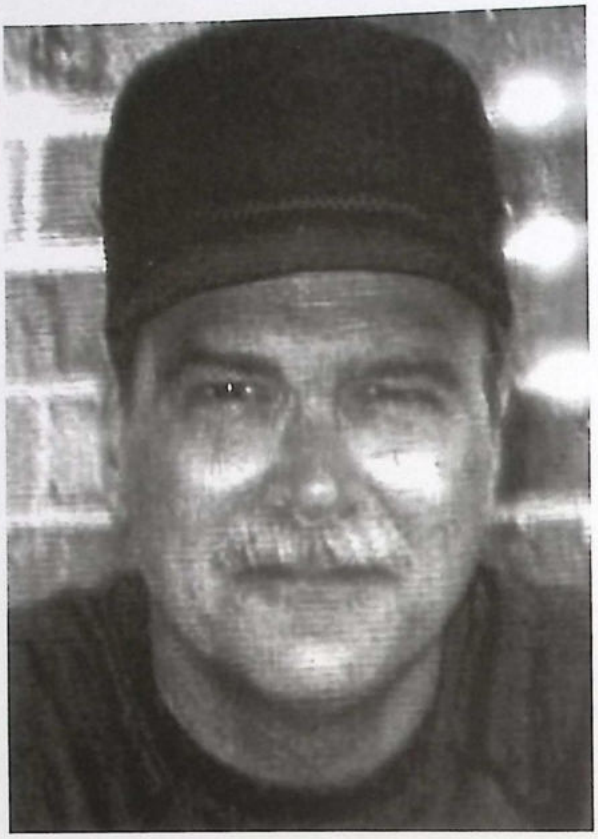
Past Tense continues with their brave venture of issuing short and easy to read pamphlets. To continue with one of the themes in their publishing local radical and working class history they deal with the Camberwell area of London. A particularly long running fair (1279 to 1855) was held in Camberwell. The unrestrained goings-on at the Fair were viewed by the wealthy and respectable with increasing disgust by the 18th and 19th centuries. There were repeated attempts to control and curtail the enjoyment of local people with applications at Bow Magistrates Court and finally the Fair was closed down in 1855. As the pamphlet says this should be seen in the context of "a widespread campaign in the early 19th century, to impose social and moral control over the growing working classes". The pamphlet goes on to discuss radical movements in the area, including Chartism. Following one Chartist demonstration, 400 to 500 marchers fought with police in what became known as the Camberwell Riot of 1848. The General Strike of 1926 effected Camberwell and the pamphlet describes the events there, with attempts to stop scab trams, huge demonstrations and the eventual defeat of the Strike. The squatting movement of the late 60s–early 70s is also touched upon with homeless families moved into empty properties (there were over 1600 empty properties in the Borough of Southwark at the time). Squatting continued into the 1980s and up until the present time. Anti-racism and anti-fascism in Camberwell are also described, as well as the role of radical artists in the area. Another good attempt to reclaim history from the powerful and rich.

Obituary
Harold H Thompson

U.S. anarchist Harold H. Thompson has died (11/11/2008) in a Tennessee prison where he was serving life without parole at the age of 66. Harold accepted that he would never be free, and won the help of well-wishers and supporters worldwide, including many members of the AF. Harold did his best to lead a pro-active, anarchist-driven existence from within the confinement of steel and concrete walls, never an easy task given the age-old class enemy of authority, petty vindictive bureaucracy and perhaps worst of all, hostile sectarian gangs who prey on anyone not subscribed to their sick mindset. Harold could not stand prejudice or bullying, calling the perpetrators 'class clowns' as he fought daily running battles with the racist thugs, often at the cost of putting his own life in jeopardy. Himself subjected to the precariousness of survival only a couple of years ago, he was beaten to within an inch of his life by a White Aryan Supremacist gang. Hospitalisation followed, but the callousness of the U. S. judicial system meant that he never properly recovered from this and previous assaults.

This last occasion there was incontrovertible evidence of collusion between the attackers and prison personnel, which Harold was pursuing through the courts at the time of his death.

None of the violence sustained, and there was much, deterred Harold from his work to guide the indigent, the illiterate, the downtrodden, any ethnicity or maligned minority. That was what the class traitors couldn't figure out about Harold: his undiminished willingness to come to the aid of anyone who wasn't a racist, rapist or child molester. It bugged them and Harold knew he must watch his back every single day. To his great credit,



he bowed the knee to none of them.

Harold witnessed first-hand the brutalities of the American state, not only in the gulags (as he labelled U.S. incarceration facilities) but also serving in Vietnam where he was wounded under fire. It was a war that disillusioned many of the combatants including Harold who went on to adopt the ethics of anarchism from which he would never thereafter deviate.

How come he ended up sentenced to a prospect without parole? Harold made no secret that he had terminated the life of the man who had murdered his partner, the mother of his son. This action drew a life sentence, ostensibly with distant chance of release far into the future. He blew this all away in an attempted armed escape, earning himself an additional few score years.

Harold didn't always receive the support he deserved. Disappointingly, a negative response came from two prickly U.S. Anarchist Black Cross groups who refused aid when approached. It was a bitter pill to swallow, but typically he just got on with business. Britain's Anarchist Communist Federation (now the Anarchist Federation) were asked to carry out an independent investigation and duly came to the conclusion that the insinuations bore no substance. Preceding this the group Friends of Harold Thompson (FOHHT) had been reformed in the UK, where in particular, it must be said, with the ready help of many readers of this magazine a supporting network was put in place to enable Harold to mount his challenges to the U.S. legal system, one major issue being the outright denial to inmates of anarchist literature. It proved a successful outcome for prisoners across the USA.

Harold wrote a number of libertarian pamphlets, took up painting and engaged in protracted correspondence with comrades near and far, old and young, of which company this writer is one. A privilege held dear for almost 12 years. Harold will quite genuinely be missed by all whose lives he touched. He was a courageous, talented, inspirational and committed anarchist. To readers of Organise the FOHHT would like to say 'Thank You', each and everyone, for their unflagging encouragement down the years. Harold truly did appreciate it, just as he warmed to the knowledge that there were 'so many out there' determined to take the struggle to the enemy full on. As Harold used to sign off his letters, 'They'll never get us all!". Rest easy, cherished comrade.

Frankie Dee
pp. FOHTT

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Aims and principles of the Anarchist Federation
20p plus postage Available in German, Greek, Portuguese, French, Italian, Esperanto and Spanish

All available from our London address (see page two)

Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1 The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the
anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10 We oppose organised religion and religious belief(s).

Published by Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX

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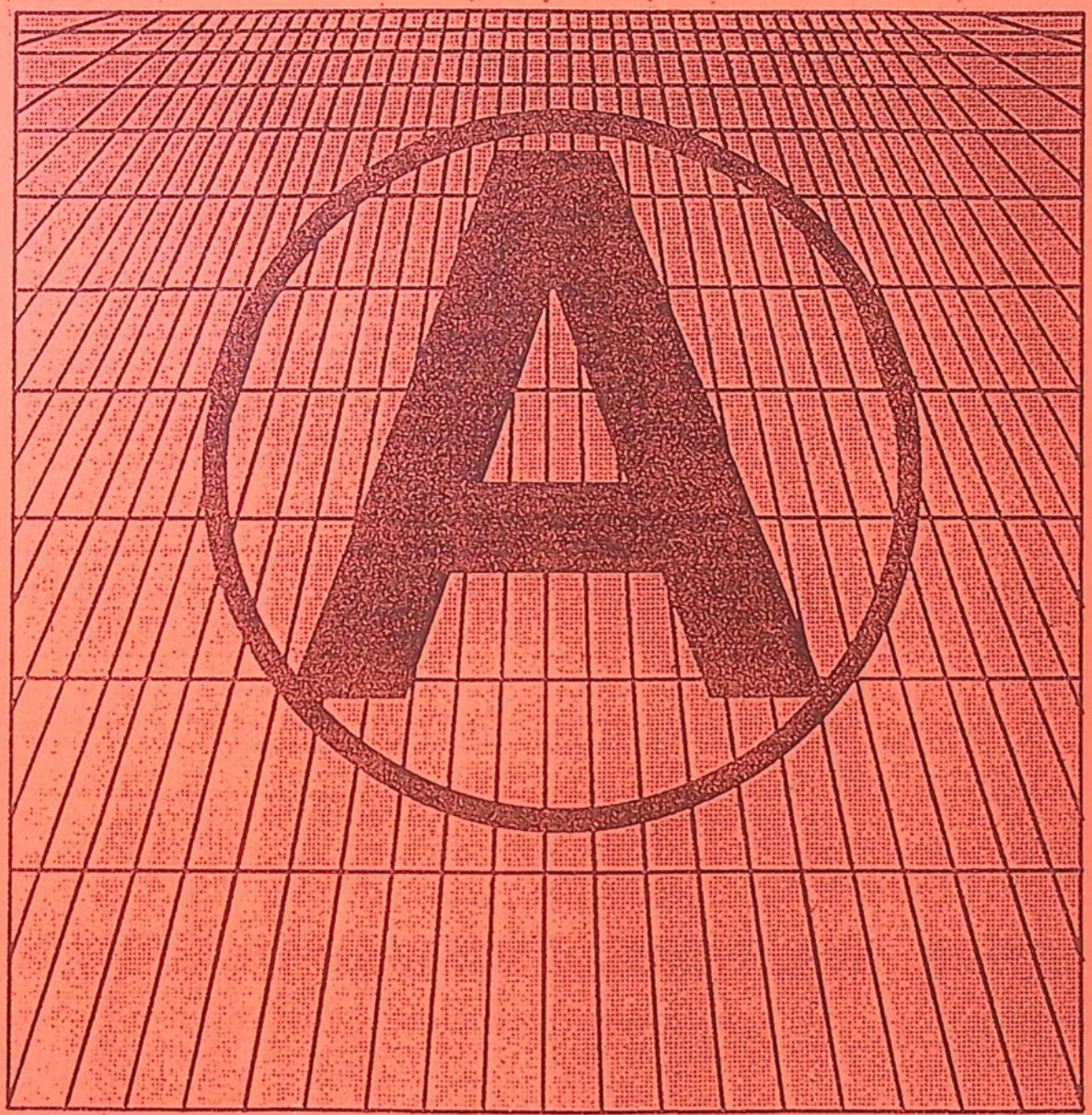

ANARCHISM

ASPECTS OF ANARCHISM

The following articles appeared in **Organise!** the quarterly magazine of the *Anarchist Communist Federation* over the last few years. They aim to explain the basic ideas of revolutionary anarchism in easy-to-understand language.

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Anarchist Communism

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM IS a distinct body of social and political ideas. Anarchist communism offers a radical alternative to the statist belief systems which have proved their bankruptcy in the twentieth century.

Marxism in both its Bolshevik and social-democratic varieties has proved a disastrous failure. Reformist feminism has made women bosses and prime ministers, but has left the majority of women still tied to the family and in low-paid jobs. Ideologies based upon capitalism, eg fascism and liberal democracy, were either blatantly murderous or hypocritically so. Only anarchist communism remains to be tested as a fully coherent approach to organising the world. As the second millennium draws to a close, its latter century has seen the almost-unrestrained rise of the state and with it virtually continuous warfare — plunder dressed up as the "global economy" and ecological devastation. The people of the world in the next century deserve much more than has been available to the great majority so far. The rise of capitalism, the technological state and imperialism have eliminated the human factor from social life. The individual in the advanced industrialised state has been removed from the community and isolated into concrete boxes, with television as the main link to the world outside. The poor majority in Africa, Latin America and Asia struggle to survive as their way of life is increasingly dictated by the needs of the insatiable global economy, with their own elites encouraging and benefiting from this exploitation. Racism and nationalism are if anything stronger, stirred up by various elements in the ruling class and taken up by many people in the working class as they see can see no other answer to their problems. Women are under attack world-wide with the rise of religious fundamentalism and the generalised obsession with the "decline of the family" and "moral values".

Anarchist communism is the alternative. It places the individual at the centre of its approach, for only active, thinking persons can ever be free. However, the individual does not exist separated from the rest of humanity. Capitalist exploitation whilst destroying "natural" communities has created and is creating social solidarity on the basis of class identity and reality, where people choose to identify with each other rather than being forced into a community because of tradition. The ruling classes of the world are waging a desperate class war against the numerically-vast population of workers and peasants. In the search for profits the producing classes are subject to ever-more savage assaults. But it is out of this struggle between exploiter and exploited, between the oppressors and the oppressed, that the mass of the population will achieve the realisation of human freedom. Social revolution is the only way of achieving liberation.

Anarchist communism is often attacked as being a utopian dream since it is both anti-capitalist and anti-state. The argument goes that both of these are necessary because of "human nature". Won't new forms of exploitation and new classes arise? Isn't it inevitable that some people have more power than others? Isn't the state necessary to keep order? We say a loud "no!" to these arguments.

Within the general context of a stateless and moneyless society, the new social order will operate through a building of community ties and along with them the creation of bodies which will be expressions of individual and community desires. There is no antagonism here between the individual and the collective for two reasons. Firstly, the individual belongs and survives within the context of the collective, so the workers and community councils as the new forms of administration will be an extension of the individual within society. Secondly, the workers and community councils (which need not necessarily be separate bodies) will have built into them a number of devices preventing the abuse of power. For example, they will be assemblies of the people themselves and should any form of delegation be necessary then the delegates will be directly elected, easily-removable and temporary.

Also, given the development of communications technology, mass participation, either within a popular assembly or via link-ups of local groups and individuals, will be possible. The assemblies at the local, district, regional and international levels will be able to plan for the future on the basis of input from participation at various stages of the peoples' assemblies. Given that there is no coercive state apparatus to enforce decisions made within the various popular organisations, there will be no physical imposing of undesirable options. The aim throughout will be to achieve results on the basis of consensus and compromise.

Anarchist communist society will be a moneyless society. Goods and services will be made available on the basis of needs. There is a limit to the number of fridges, carpets etc that people can consume, and given the downgrading of possessiveness, the inability to accumulate wealth through the amassing of possessions, the absence of advertising, and education for sharing, there will be a limit to the demand. One of the functions of money is to act as a "store of value". This allows individuals in capitalist societies to accumulate enormous sums, well in excess of what they can ever spend. In a moneyless society there is no means of accumulating wealth, thus creating another obstacle to the reemergence of a ruling class.

It may be objected that this basis of social organisation is fine for local village-sized populations but is unworkable on a larger scale. However, there is no reason why it could not operate on a larger scale if it is based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and federation which would still allow for freedom and solidarity. Even within capitalism, when examined, huge organisations and corporations are little more than conglomerations of small groups organised within a given managerial structure. Local, small-scale efforts are channelled in a particular direction. There is no reason why those efforts could not be channelled voluntarily for the common and individual good, with the impetus coming from below.

For an anarchist communist society to operate effectively, education in the widest sense must prioritise a socialisation process which stresses personal growth, a love of freedom together with a sense of responsibility and solidarity. Subtle Capitalist education has effectively gained an acceptance amongst most of the population of the system that exploits them through a subtle process of brainwashing and a distortion of the natural tendency towards social solidarity by stressing patriotism, nationalism and loyalty to the company. An anarchist communist approach to education would allow the natural tendencies to develop so that individuals would be able effectively to participate in the new society with confidence and responsibility.

Most other ideologies aim to dominate and control nature and indeed the last two centuries have witnessed a total transformation of the natural world as it has been twisted and distorted to fit the supposed needs of human beings. Now, nature is giving its reply, to such an extent that the very existence of humanity is threatened. Anarchist communism seeks to work in harmony with natural forces, utilising appropriate levels of technology to meet people's needs. There are enough resources on the planet to provide a living for all, without destroying the planet in the process.

Anarchist communism is the only ideology which challenges all exploitation and oppression, whether it be of workers by the bosses, women by men or the environment by human beings. It alone emphasises both freedom of the individual and solidarity within the community and struggles for a society which is free of both economic exploitation and the oppressive state. Anarchist communism alone can point the way forward to survival and well-being.

ACE: Anarchist Communist Editions

ACE pamphlets are available from c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

NEW! *Anarchism — as we see it*. A newly-revised edition of our very popular pamphlet. Describes the basic ideas of anarchist communism in easy-to-read form. 60p and SAE.

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OUT NOW! A completely revised new edition of our hugely popular *Basic Bakunin*. 60p and SAE.

Also due out by the time this mag appears — *Aspects of Anarchism* — collected articles from the pages of *Organise!* on the fundamentals of anarchist communism.

IN PREPARATION. Our long-awaited pamphlet on ecology should soon be appearing, as well as our *Manifesto for the Millennium*. *The Myth of Labour's Socialism* is now out of print.

MILITARISM

OF ALL THE 'ISMS', militarism is the most poisonous, destructive and dangerous. When active it destroys people, cultures and rational thought. When relatively passive (though it is never truly passive) it enters the minds and value systems of society in a way which reinforces conformity and obedience.

Military values require uniformity, not only of appearance but also of attitude and values. The armed forces expend considerable effort in ensuring that the soldiers at all levels accept without question the inherent and unquestionable superiority of their methods, aims and ideology. In the heat of battle there is no scope for questioning of the validity of the campaign or particular assault. Robot-like acceptance is paramount.

Militarism, the glorification of military values and methods, has a long history. In Europe, Asia and South America that undoubted symbol of militarism, the military uniform, and with it distinct armed forces, have existed for thousands of years. Witness the carved reliefs of the Assyrians looted from Iraq and currently at the British Museum which show the disciplined armed ranks engaged in warfare. These are well over 2,500 years old.

Military values also accept without question the validity of hierarchy. Orders start at the top and are passed down to the ranks. Whilst there is scope for individual decision-masking — no large organisation can cope without imagination and initiative — this can only be permissable within the strict and rigid structure of the chain of command. Despite scepticism within the ranks, in the final analysis orders are there to be obeyed. Obedience is an essential feature of the military approach and, in wartime, failure can lead to severe punishments.

A further feature of the military approach is discipline. The soldier, sailor or airforce person must act as part of a team, exercising self-discipline in all circumstances. And this self-discipline must be an extension and internalisation of the wider military discipline. Discipline, hierarchy and obedience combine to realise most effectively the ultimate aim of military values, the activation of violence.

Since the days of the spear and bow, military technology has pursued a single goal, the most effective destruction of the enemy with the minimum losses to one's own side. The armed forces of the world's most powerful nations possess killing capacity that make Dresden and Hiroshima look like tea parties.

Militarism is the application of military methods and values to the wider society. This is done most effectively when it accompanies some other so-called truth such as religion, racial purity, imperialism and nationalism. In its most effective expressions — Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia — all opposition was either eliminated or cowed and the whole society subjected to military methods and organisation, leading ultimately to war. Whether racial nationalism in Germany or 'socialism in one country' in Russia (leading to the 'Great Patriotic War') the identification of nation with militarism was a powerful concoction. More recently there have been pale imitations such as Saddam Hussein's 'adventures' in Iran and Kuwait, with the resultant impoverishment of civilian life in all senses.

With the re-emergence of religious fundamentalism as a significant force, combined with nationalism and militarism, a truly powerful cocktail of destruction is being concocted. This is not new, imperial Japan used it to good effect, but it appears to be on the rise again. Imagine a Christian/imperialist/militarist USA saving the world in accordance with professed religiously inspired values!

Militarism is not restricted to dictatorships. It insidiously permeates many corners of life in so-called democratic societies. Young boys in particular are subtly and not so subtly inculcated into militaristic approaches of behaviour and thought. Organisations such as the Scouts and the various cadet forces all apparently stress individual growth and adventure but also promote military ideas and values. Should anyone be sceptical on this point, one should compare the uniforms, 'adventure', camps and other methods of building group uniformity of the Scouts with those of the Hitler Youth. The similarities are remarkable.

Whilst not wanting to over-exaggerate the importance of militaristic youth organisations, they are symptomatic of an underlying militarism in capitalist society. Violent video computer games are seen as a threat, whilst kids fingering sub-machine guns and clambering over tanks in armed forces publicity events is widely seen as OK.

The British military presence in Northern Ireland has further deepened and extended public acceptance of militarism. The fact that the British armed forces have systematically used repressive violence to maintain capitalist order has barely raised a murmur on the mainland. Problems are only perceived when a British soldier is killed or maimed (or imprisoned for gunning down an unarmed civilian). The British soldier is raised up on a pedestal, and even when convicted of murdering a civilian is considered to be innocent by the Establishment and mass media.

The annual poppy day rituals at war memorials throughout Britain remind the populace of official recognition of the importance of the armed forces. Whilst they are hypocritically designated as honouring those who were killed or wounded in war (whilst insulting the widows and handicapped by poverty level allowances) they effectively glorify war. In particular they make sacred the whole system of the military machine by investing it with a religious/patriotic/emotional/ quality. War, all war fought in 'British interests' is thus legitimised and placed beyond criticism.

Spectacles such as these keep public interest in things military at a fairly constant level, ready to be mobilised in time of the ruling class's need to go to war. They, and the accompanying propaganda are a part of a mythologising process which legitimises all past British military actions. And, by extension, serve to do the same for any future conflicts.

Militarism, whilst low key in the so-called liberal democracies, has been given a new dimension and magical quality in its association with advanced technology. There are no limits on what technology and science are supposed to be able to offer. Never mind the fact that so much military advanced technology does not seem to work or results in the wiping out of the 'home side'. Death by 'friendly fire' is unfortunate but it is quickly forgotten compared to the crimes, real or invented, of the enemy.

Not only is technology presented as an ever-improving means of overcoming the future enemy but it is our technology which is presented as superior, thus reinforcing the militaristic arrogance of the gullible population.

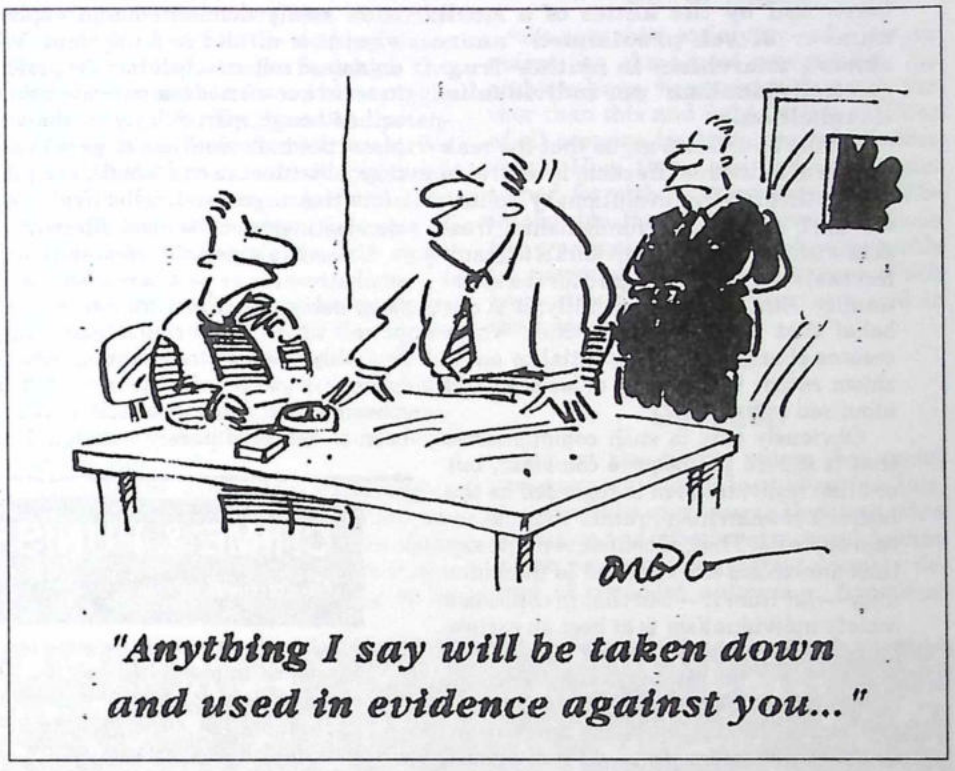
Strangely, for weapons of mass destruction, the never-ending additions to the military arsenal are often presented in a benign manner. Fascination with new technology has been harnessed to give the state's murder machines a sexy quality. Look at that fighter bomber, admire its curves, its smooth lines, its power, its performance.

This ties in with the cult of masculinity which reaches its height in the armed forces. The parody of what males should be like is shown in the hardness, the brutality, the excessive drinking, the segregation from women in many parts of the armed forces in every country, which lead on to brutal attacks on civilians, as seen recently with the Paras in Britain, the Greenjackets in Cyprus, and the torture and killing of a Somali by Canadian Paras keeping the 'peace'. It leads on to the mass rape by soldiers — witness the systemised rape by Serbian soldiers as a form of terror, the rape of tens of thousands of women by Red Army soldiers when they invaded Germany at the end of World War 2, only just admitted to. Any idea that the Armed Forces are institutions which women should participate in, is dangerous rubbish. The best thing that working class women can do, to benefit themselves and their class, is fight to dismantle the Armed Forces!

Fortunately, but not always effectively, militarism has usually been countered by anti-militarist movements. Indeed revolutionary anarchists have always taken a lead in anti-militarist activities. It should be obvious to everyone (but isn't) that the people with the most to sacrifice and the least to gain from militarism are working class people. Apart

Crime and punishment

THE DESIRE FOR punishment — the inflicting of pain on perceived wrong doers — has a long and inglorious history. Religions which are the hand-maidens of authoritarian rule are full of accounts of the most horrendous punishments dished out by God and his followers. An eternity of hellfire awaits even minor offenders against God's (and by extension rulers') order. It is an essential fact of punishment that it is imposed by people in power upon those who are relatively powerless — parents and teachers against children and the State against its citizens. It is equally true that punishment is ineffective in achieving its aims.



"Anything I say will be taken down and used in evidence against you..."

Anarchist communists have serious and fundamental objections to the idea of punishment on a number of grounds — moral, ideological and practical. Kropotkin, for example in his pamphlet *Prisons and their Moral Influence on Prisoners* demolishes all of the arguments used by the State to defend human incarceration. In what seems remarkably up to date arguments, he writes in 1877 that "Once a man (sic) has been in prison, he will return. It is inevitable, and statistics prove it. The annual reports of the administration of criminal justice in France show that one-half of all those who yearly get into the police courts for minor offences received their education in prisons... As for central prisons, more than one-third of the prisoners released from the supposedly correctional institutions are reimprisoned in the course of twelve months after their liberation" (from Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, Dover Books.

Pathological

The picture in Britain today is hardly different, indicating a pathological lack of imagination on the part of the State. In Britain around one person in a thousand is currently in prison — and crime is said to be continually on the rise! So much for their effectiveness in combatting crime.

There are a number of arguments which are used to support the idea of punishment. These include the idea that a given action deserves a certain reward or punishment. So, good children deserve rewards and naughty children deserve to receive a punishment. This may seem fine in principle, the problem arises in allocating a just and deserved punishment. What punishment is deserved for armed robbery for example, a slap on the wrist, community service, or execution? The punishment meted out in practice will vary according to the prejudices, values and attitudes and irritation of the judge in a given case. But the fact remains that whatever the punishment, it involves the imposition of suffering on the individual by the State on, usually, the lower orders. Since most laws are designed to protect private property and social inequality in defence of the rich, it is not suprising that most punishments are inflicted on the lower orders who do not share in the pickings.

Another standard argument for punishment is that it deters people from carrying out criminal and anti-social acts (again defined in terms which support the status-quo). The problem with this approach is that it does not work. As Kropotkin pointed out earlier in this article, prisons are full of persistent offenders who have frequently been punished. In the 17th Century in England, prisoners were executed in public for stealing silk handkerchiefs. Whilst the crowd was totally enthralled at the hanging, thieves would mingle and steal silk handkerchiefs! So much for the ultimate deterrent. People, quite simply, will only commit crimes (generally) if they are pretty sure they will not get caught and punished.

Primitive

Many people have a primitive basic need to extract revenge for a wrong committed against them. Blood feuds between families are examples of this approach, where one wrongdoing has to be matched by another from generation to generation, to the absurd point that the original cause has been forgotten about. However, as a rational response to wrong-doing, vengeance which is motivated strongly by irrational feelings, must rate as an inappropriate response.

A further approach includes the idea that wrongdoers should be helped or reformed, though there will always be an element of pain involved in the punishment. Unfortunately, the State has no real interest in exploring the social causes of crime, or for that matter questioning the nature of the problem. For every John McVicar or Jimmy Boyle 'rehabilitated', there are hundreds of thousands who have not. Punishment exists to keep the lid on social unrest but patently fails to do so.

So what is an anarchist communist view on punishment? Well, firstly it should be realised that all of the usual justifications and methods of punishment are rejected, especially in relation to anarchist communist society. The need to hurt people in the name of the State will disappear. Capitalism, in countless ways does psychological damage to people, so it is not surprising that this often finds expression in anti-social acts. Capitalist society divides, humiliates, and deprives millions of people. Anarchist communist society in contrast involves people in the

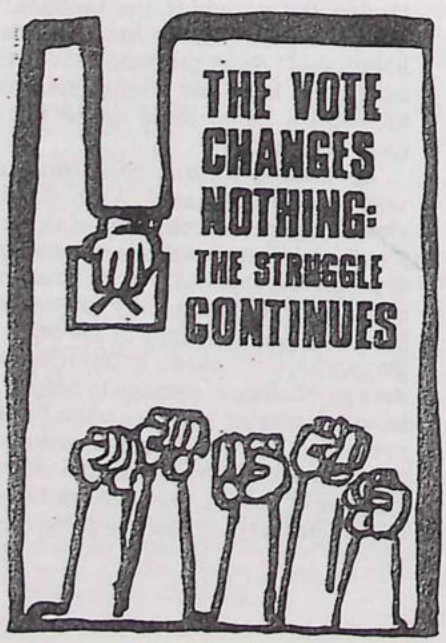
COLLECTIVE ACTION

CONTRARY TO POPULAR prejudice, fostered by both media caricatures and by the antics of a small number of self-proclaimed "anarchists", anarchism is neither "rugged individualism" nor individualistic rebellion.

Whilst anarchists argue that the realisation of individual freedom is central to any authentically revolutionary politics we don't equate this fundamental freedom with the right of individuals to manifest their ego without regard for the social totality. But, more importantly, it is our belief that it is *collective* action which creates change and is essential to anarchism rather the activity of isolated and atomised individuals.

Obviously this is such commonsense that it should not require comment, but so often individualism is regarded as the bedrock of anarchism, rather than its actual opposite. That, of course, is not to say that anarchists are opposed to individuality — far from it — but that in capitalist society individual*ism* is at best an excuse by some to selfishly indulge themselves and at worst an ideology which encourages the most horrendous competitivness and exploitation. Capitalism loves (and sings the highest praises of) individualism whilst crushing real individuality. Capitalism, however, fears collective action. A Trade Union's strength is founded upon the potential, on the partof its membership, for collective action. Its ability to mobilize and control this action is crucial in maintaining its credibility and position as labour broker. Once the threat of collective action is removed, however,the Trade Unions tend to be no longer taken seriously by employers nor members.

The individual can be compared to the finger of a hand. On its own it's not particularly strong or effective but in unison with the other fingers it can become a fist.



The working class, in whatever context, be it the community or the workplace, is more easily dominated and exploited when it is divided and impotent. When organised collectively it has the potential to act in a concerted manner against capital. Although, particularly in the workplace, the individual can engage in sabotage, absenteeism and "theft", even these activities organised collectively (even clandestinely) can be more effective.

Collective action also creates a spirit of combativeness as people realise that, far from being powerless, they in fact have power which can bring about change. Probably the most outstanding example in recent years was the anti-Poll Tax movement. If resistance to that tax had been in terms of purely individual non-payment, of individuals separated from others refusing to pay, rather than in the form of a community of collective struggle, then it would have rapidly collapsed as individuals were isolated and picked off by the state.

Similarly the individual anarchist can only do so much on their own. The feeling of isolation which capitalism imposes on the individual rebel can often lead to disillusionment and despair. But, collective action in the shape of an anarchist group can accomplish far more whilst a national network constantly keeping militants informed and motivated . . . well who knows what we could achieve? Why not take the *individual* decision to take some *collective* action with the Anarchist Communist Federation?

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Continued

way so as to make life worthwhile, secure and free.

In capitalist society there are huge differences in wealth and power, so it is very likely that its victims turn to violence and robbery in ways which are similar to the working of capitalism itself. Anarchist communism in contrast is based upon social justice, equality, freedom and the abolition of money. Given these circumstances many of the preconditions which give rise to crime and, consequently, punishment, will disappear. Similarly, the abolition of the concept of victimless crime will remove a whole category of acts from the realm of wider social involvement.

The classical anarchist approach to the problem of anti-social behaviour is to remove them from the community and put them out of harm's way — in other words exile. How feasible this approach would be in the modern world is debatable. Why should one community have to cope with the social rejects of another? On the other hand why should a community have to put up with the anti- social actions of certain individuals? The issue of self-defence arises here, for surely every community has the right and responsibility to protect itself from internal and external threats.

It would be foolish to argue that anarchist communist society would implicitly mean the abolition of anti-social behaviour. Another anarchist approach to punishment is to empower the 'medical model'. In other words, wrongdoers are not bad but maybe mad. A danger with this attitude, despite its well-meaning approach is that different behaviour might be deemed to be unacceptably bad and a suitable case for treatment. In capitalist societies like Britain so-called 'secure' hospitals are no better than prisons. Perhaps they are worse.

There are no simple solutions to the problems posed by serial rapists and killers etc. However, two, hopefully not incompatible principles will apply, namely the justification of individual and communal self-defence and protection on one hand, and the freedom of the individual on the other. A caring approach, applied in a humanitarian and non-harmful way must in the end be the basis of an anarchist communist alternative to punishment.

SOLIDARITY

THE IDEA THAT the individual is of supreme importance is only a relatively recent development in historical terms. For most of human history, belonging to a group took precedence as people identified with the tribe, the clan, the family and locality.

Social solidarity was what counted and acts committed by individuals were perceived to be the responsibility of the wider social groupings to which they belonged. Blood feuds, for example, which involved warring extended families, often arose from the action of a single individual but carried collective responsibility.

Unlike modern capitalism, which tends to isolate individuals, pre-capitalist systems tended to incorporate them. People were bound together through a variety of strong social ties. This social solidarity was once the normal and universal form of relationship.

Natural

Insofar as individuals find it extremely difficult to live in total isolation, we may argue that social solidarity, to some degree, is natural. Human beings are social animals who necessarily must cooperate. Even within modern industrial societies, the urge to belong to some community or other seems overwhelming. So-called tribalism in respect of football supporters is an example of this.

In the fight against exploitation and oppression within the capitalist system, workers have always recognised the need for solidarity in order to win even basic demands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, striking workers have had to try to create and enforce the greatest degree of unity in order to beat their employers. The tension between individualism arising from the dynamic of capitalism and the need for united action has been one of the main preoccupations of workers in struggle. The issue of 'scab' labour has been so important that the success of workers' actions has often depended upon the ability to overcome imported strike-breakers.

Trade unions normally act as a barrier to wider solidarity since their main concern is with a particular craft, industry or occupation.

Sectionalism, meaning a divided workforce, has always been an essential feature of trade unionism in Britain.

Powerful

Solidarity on a mass scale can be tremendously powerful. During the General Strike of 1926 in Britain, sympathy and support for locked-out miners was so great that there was no strike breaking from within the working class. The one serious occasion in which the union bosses pushed for united struggle ended in disaster. The power and potential threat of millions of workers on strike frightened the government. It frightened the union leaders even more and they called off the strike when the issue of parliamentary sovereignty (sic) came onto the agenda.

The failure to achieve solidarity of purpose and action usually has dire consequences. During the 1984 miners strike internal dissension within the union's ranks and lack of significant support outside seriously weakened the struggle to preserve jobs.

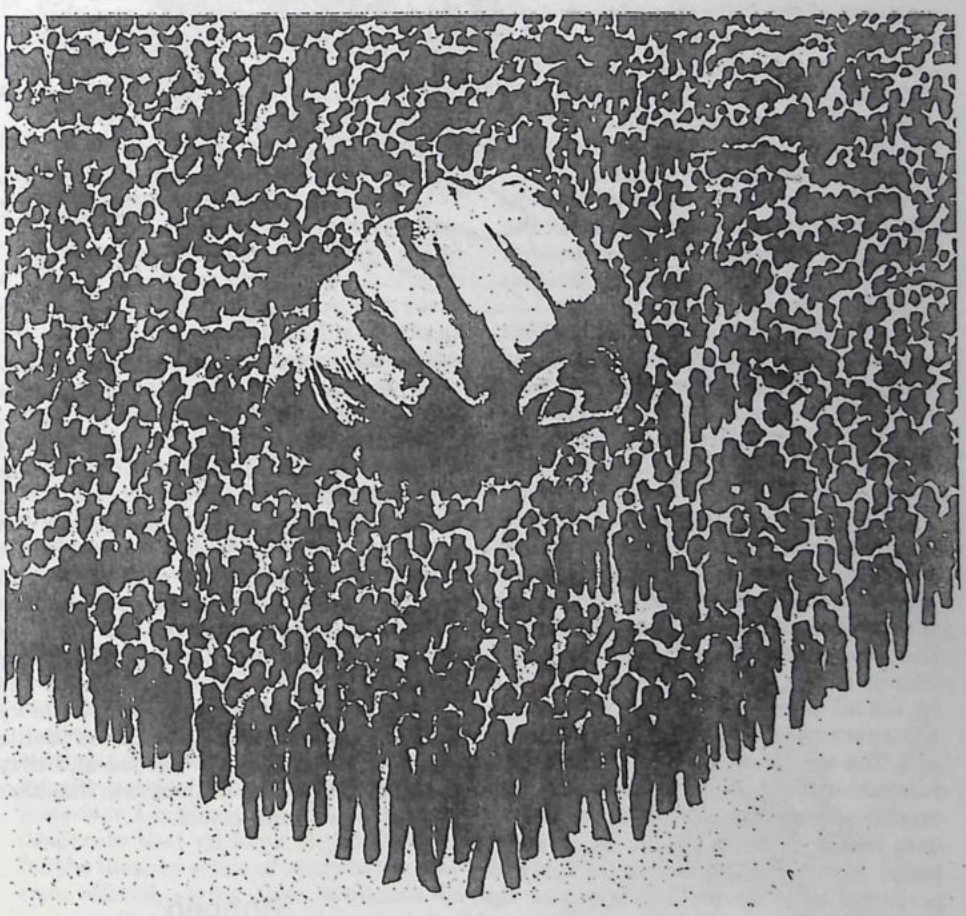
If solidarity is important for struggles which are of a defensive and limited nature within capitalism, then it is clear that in order to overthrow the system, the widest determined unity is going to be essential. Failure to involve the great mass of working class people and at least neutralise most others will lead either to quick defeat or civil war. The greater the cohesion of the struggle, the easier will be the task of creating post revolutionary anarchy.

Government

An anarchist society by definition requires the absence of government. Anarchists have, however, gone much further than this and fight for the abolition of all coercive institutions and relationships. How then, can order be maintained, for without order society would be intolerable. Part of the answer must lie in the creation of networks of manageable (in personal terms) social groups which have strong bonds within them and in their wider contacts.

Dynamic

Whilst the danger exists that social pressures will negate individual freedom, these must be counteracted by libertarian education and effective structural devices which promote the greatest possible degree of personal autonomy. Anarchist communists believe that social solidarity is simply the most 'natural' form of living in the world. Anarchy will not be an amalgam of unconnected, isolated individuals but a dynamic solidarity in which people interact on the basis of freedom and equality.



Against exploitation

THE DEVELOPMENT OF class societies, which in ancient times replaced egalitarian societies throughout the world, were disastrous for the great mass of humanity.

Although there were often gains, in terms of increased productivity through improved communications etc, society became divided into haves and have nots. Class societies are based upon exploitation — the process by which the many provide for the greater well-being of the few.

The 'invention' of private property and the explosion of capitalism as the dominant economic system in the last few hundred years brought the process of exploitation to near perfection.

Exploitation under capitalism primarily means that workers are robbed by their employers of the full value of their efforts as expressed in value of the work they do. There is an irony here, since most employers look very seriously at pilfering. Robbery, it seems is OK for the bosses but not for the workers.

Only a portion of the wealth that workers create actually goes to them. The rest goes to the capitalist, forming the basis of profit which in turn leads to the building up of huge fortunes. Even quite small employers frequently leave in excess of one million pounds in their wills.

Marx

Karl Marx, despite any objections that anarchists might make about his centralism, statism, etc offered some useful insights into how exploitation occurs. Wealth, he pointed out, comes about when the raw materials provided by nature (wood, cotton, coal, etc) are transformed by labour using technology (tools, scientific processes, manufacturing techniques etc). The employer provides the necessary raw materials or part-finished goods, fuel, machines and premises which the worker uses in her or his daily labour. Incidentally, given that the idea of 'private property' is so deeply ingrained in the minds of ordinary people, the provision of factories and machines helps convince workers of the acceptability of their condition.

Workers produce, by using their intelligence, skill, and adaptability, products of a certain value, say £800 each per week, yet earns only £200 each. After other costs have been met, say another £200, the employer takes from the workers surplus value from each worker of £400. If in the workplace this is carried on many times over, then we can see how firms can make huge profits.

Profitability however, is based on the assumption that there is a demand for the products and that they can be sold. In times of recession this may not be possible. It is then that the workers become viewed as an economic liability and sacked, for the employer sees the worker's labour power as just one more commodity which has a price. As profits fall, fewer workers are needed and they are put on the scrap heap in such numbers as to restore profit levels.

Robbed

So, the workers are robbed day in, day out. Unfortunately, they are usually unaware of this. Many workers go along with the idea of 'a fair day's work for a fair day's pay'. In other words, there is an acceptance of the employer's right to manage, to expect hard work and the system of wage labour. Their exploitation is by and large invisible to them, though they may be aware of a sense of injustice.

Embrace

The workers, by and large, accept the capitalist economic approach of seeing themselves as a cost of production, rather than the main source of wealth. In doing so, they are unwittingly accepting the capitalist system. There are many reasons why workers embrace their exploitation. In part it is due to the persuasive power of education and the mass media but also, it is a result of trade unionism.

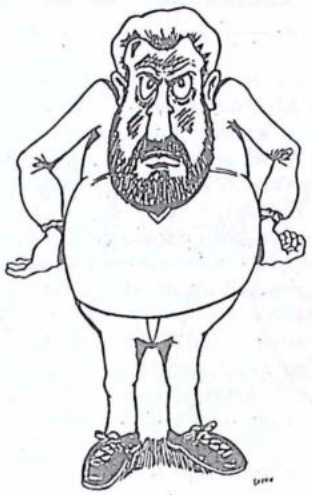
Trade unions accept capitalism. Their role is not to help bring about its destruction but to operate within it. In doing so they help promote capitalist exploitation. The unions try to improve wages and conditions, and in doing so accept management's right to manage and the employers right to profitability. The process of collective bargaining between workers and management is a recognition of the legitimacy of the system. In other words, at best, the unions pursue a 'fairer'(!) system of exploitation.

In addition, by dividing workers on the basis of craft, skill, industry and class, the unions are aiding the process of exploitation by undermining workers' solidarity. A divided working class is a weakened one. The pattern of exploitation is not an equal one. Where employers feel they have extra scope to extend the level of exploitation they will do so. For example young workers, immigrants and women for different reasons are vulnerable and subject to deep-seated cultural oppressions which are extended into the sphere of work. Despite so-called protective legislation women still earn a lot less than men, even when the work is of a similar character.

Unlike many Marxists who view the process of exploitation in so-called scientific terms anarchist communists find no room for such 'objectivity'. Capitalism is a system which is morally unjust, corrupting and degrading. The wages system which produces exploitation must be swept away in the movement to destroy capitalism.

As Kropotkin pointed out, all of the wealth of the world which has been produced over the centuries is the result of the efforts of all of humanity. This wealth must be restored to all of the people of the world — it belongs to no-one and everyone.

HUMAN NATURE



THE QUESTION OF human nature is a fundamental starting point of any political and social philosophy. The major historic political philosophers such as Hobbes and Rousseau had very definite views on the subject, that shaped the nature of their proposed ideal societies.

Generally speaking, political standpoints which have a 'pessimistic' view of human nature are on the right of capitalism. 'Pessimism' in this context means that human beings (or at least the masses) are seen as morally weak, corruptible, greedy and deserving of leadership. Societies, seen from this approach, should be constructed on a hierarchical basis, with the weak masses being controlled by an enlightened, or otherwise superior, élite or ruling class. Fascism and conservatism share the view that leadership, the strong state to enforce the leadership, and economic inequality, are desirable, being in accordance with the reality of human nature.

Propaganda

It must be admitted that in British society as a whole, and indeed in many others, many working people share a pessimistic approach, by and large. Decades of propaganda have been swallowed whole through the schools and the media, and the need for social inequality and the impossibility of an egalitarian society are generally accepted. Human nature, we are assured, makes a just and equal society an impossible utopian dream.

Anarchist communism as a political doctrine involves an 'optimistic' view of human nature, whilst taking a very critical (some would say cynical) view of the realities of present-day social and political organisations involved within the capitalist system. We obviously reject the pessimism of the right, which we are convinced is nothing more than a justification of exploitation of most of humankind. How can such an optimistic approach to human nature be justified on the part of anarchist communists?

Firstly, we look to anthropology to show that human societies have been and are often organised on communistic lines. Here, Harold Barclay's *People Without Government* and Pierre Clastre's *Society Against the State* contain numerous examples of peoples living without classes or the State perfectly happily. Archaeology tells us that the State and economic classes only emerged in a number of places about 5,000 years ago (Iraq, Egypt etc) and that the rest of us coped without the State for a lot longer. The reasons why the State and classes did emerge are controversial issues, but the truth is that humans lived in classless societies for tens of thousands of years. If human nature was selfish, individualistic, greedy, mean etc, such societies could never have existed, never mind surviving for millennia.

Impossible

Now, it is impossible to 'prove' the anarchist communist case that people are basically cooperative and social in their approach to life. After all, there are daily examples of individuals acting in selfish and uncaring ways. Our reply to this is that the development of hierarchy, social classes, the State and capitalism have all taken their toll and have distorted our fundamental human natures. Human beings, unlike all other living creatures, have the capacity to act consciously against their natures (deliberately abstaining from food or sex, for example) and equally are highly flexible in their response to 'abnormal' social conditions which typify everyday life. What is remarkable is that given the fundamentally anti-human nature of capitalist society, so many people still retain any sense of cooperativeness, solidarity and caring approaches to life.

People also need security in their everyday lives within the context of community solidarity and cohesiveness. In inter-war Germany, conditions were so desperate that millions of people opted for the illusory sense of security that fascism offered, rather than bourgeois democracy (for an interesting discussion of this see Erich Fromm's *Fear of Freedom*). Today, the desperate need for security and community induces people to join all sorts of religious cults. The rise of alternative religions in the West is directly attributable to the essentially anti-human qualities of capitalism.

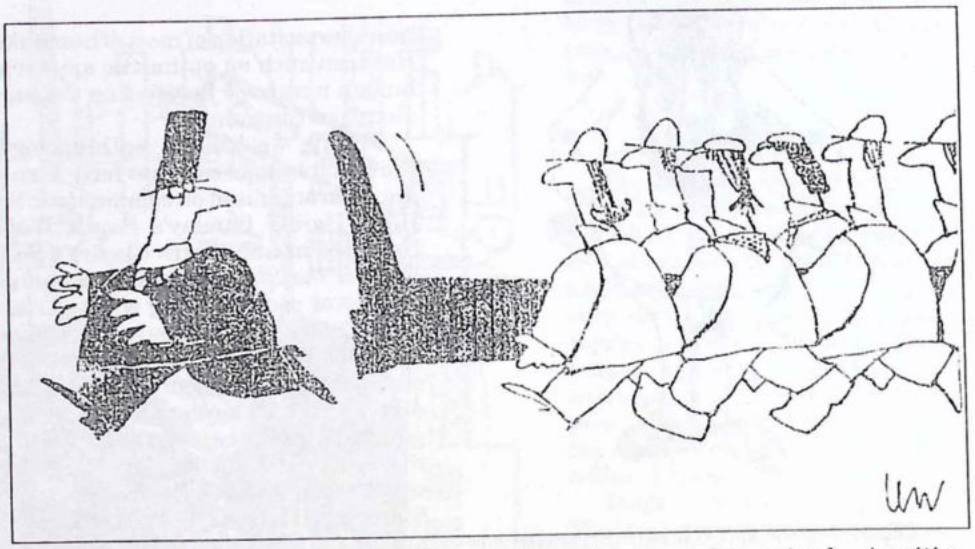
Along with the basic needs of community and security (both economic and psychological) humans must have a significant degree of personal autonomy, or if you like, freedom, if they are to develop according to their natures. Capitalist societies offer the illusion of freedom whilst enslaving millions in factories, shops, offices and the home. The political and legal systems fix the limits of freedom ever more narrowly, distorting and deforming in all sorts of ways the daily lives of working people. Exploitation and domination by capitalism has created an army of confused and lost people, unable to relate with others on a meaningful level.

Conformity

Children are moulded to conform to a sexual division of labour. Boys are cajoled into playing active, aggressive and masculine roles. Their sensitivities must be suppressed — "Big boys don't cry" — and they are conditioned to deny themselves. Girls in contrast are brought up to be passive and dependent, with the ultimate aim of motherhood, to achieve completeness as a person. Socialisation of this sort begins at birth. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour is not natural, but has to be learned through a long, and often painful, process. No wonder that so many people are fucked up, given that the process is imposed on all, regardless of their sensitivities.

Only anarchist communism allows f the full development of human beings. alone bases its approach upon the base of community, solidarity, personal autor omy and collective security within a non exploitative, classless society. Though human nature is necessarily very complex with the interplay of various desires and needs, only in the anarchist communist society of the future can it be revealed in all its fullness. Creativity, love, belonging and freedom are mutilated qualities in today's world. In the society of the future, they will be set free.

Revolutionary Violence



THE ISSUE OF violence within the anarchist movement has long been controversial.

The early anarchist movement associated with Bakunin was openly insurrectionary and the anarchist communists of the late 19th century regarded acts of terror against oppressors as perfectly legitimate. Kropotkin, Malatesta, Most and others enthused over acts of 'propaganda by the deed'. This idea stressed the importance of exemplary actions like strikes, occupations of public buildings etc, by small groups of revolutionaries that would ignite an already revolutionary situation. It very quickly turned into the idea of determined individuals carrying out individual attacks on kings, presidents and capitalists. Given the severe repression in France, for example, after the bloody crushing of the Paris Commune and where open activity was difficult, this was understandable. The State, through the media, were able to so closely associate violence with anarchism that the two ideas became almost interchangeable in the public mind, to the detriment of the movement. Today there are many so-called anarchists who reject the whole revolutionary tradition. So, how should revolutionary anarchists approach the issue?

The first point to make is that it is states acting in defence of privilege and exploitation that practice violence on a large scale. The assassinations of heads of state pale into insignificance in contrast to the normal, everyday actions of the state. In a real sense, states are organised violence. The armed forces, police, prisons and so on are institutional forms of violence used to protect the status quo. And the status quo is in itself violence for it means mass poverty, homelessness, poor health and despair. Should anyone question this legalised everyday terror they are met with the full repressive fist of the state.

State violence

And states are not content to inflict violence on their subject populations, but relish the opportunity to apply it to other peoples. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are perhaps the most horrific examples of this. Some leaders, such as Hitler and Stalin, excelled in murdering millions in both the domestic and external fields of operation. In this context, the bomb throwers and armed expropriators of our revolutionary history must be seen for what they were — heroic, if misguided people acting in self-defence against 'normal' state violence.

With the exception of pacifists, most people accept self-defence as legitimate. To defend oneself or one's family from attack is readily understood and accepted. To defend the oppressed and exploited class is just an extension of this principle. To use appropriate and measured violence against the incarnation of violence which is the state, is no more than to launch a counter-attack. A violent insurrection or general strike must be seen in these terms — legitimate, justified and necessary self defence against the monster of the capitalist state. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge this, necessarily accepts the 'right' of the capitalist state to devour us.

A key point however, needs to be considered, namely that individual acts of violence, however well intentioned, justified by anger, poverty or despair are generally counter productive. Individual terror and group conspiracies are quite easily containable by the state. Rather than inspiring the masses to insurrection, they have generally appalled them, especially given the huge propaganda machines available to oppressors.

Revolutionary mass violence is, however, a different thing if it expresses a determination to overthrow exploitation and oppression. And it takes various forms. The seizure of workplaces, banks and other property is inherently violent since it forcibly removes their possession from their owners. To not do so would be to capitulate to the system of exploitation.

Anarchist revolutionaries defend every method used by the oppressed against the enemy from peaceful and legal protest up to and including violent uprising. Violence as a goal in itself is unjustified and indeed in revolutionary situations working class people have tended to shrink from its use. Not so the state, which on finally securing victory, unleashes a reign of mass terror. Anyone doubting this should look at the aftermaths of the Paris Commune or the Spanish Civil War.

Revolutionary violence is the clear expression of the masses' refusal to continue any longer with the old ways. Sometimes, however, determined minorities, often inspired by Marxist-Leninism, have managed to seize control of such movements for their own ends. The October Revolution of 1917 led to the creation of one of the world's most brutal states. This mistake must not be repeated. Either the revolution is about smashing the state once and for all, or it merely brings about another form of oppression.

Attacks

During the last ten years, the working class has been subject to ever-increasing attacks. Mass unemployment is now seen as 'normal' by those unaffected by it. There has been a large redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, leaving millions in a state of near destitution. Exceptionally regressive taxes have driven millions into a hand to mouth existence. State inspired racist violence is common in some parts of our cities. Given this context, is it surprising that we have had outbursts of near-insurrectionary violence? The poll tax riot was a clear and welcome expression of class anger, as were the 'hit squads' which immobilised vehicles and stood up to the police during the lengthy miners strike of 1984-85. When black people form self-defence groups against fascist attacks, they are justified. When demonstrators retaliate against police provocations they are justified. When a whole class rises up against the state and capitalism, it is justified.

When, later this year, we hear stories of old people freezing to death due to the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel, perhaps those who comdemn revolutionary violence will have a cause to think. Capitalism and the state aren't going to go away or be reformed. They need to be destroyed, and unfortunately violence by the working class is almost certainly a necessary ingredient in this process.

DIRECT ACTION

ONE OF THE central themes of anarchism is that people should have the freedom and the means to take full control of their lives. Both individually and collectively anarchists have developed an approach to human emancipation. This has come to be called direct action and takes many forms. Anarchists believe that there is a strong correlation between means and ends and this means freedom is not something that can be granted to us by politicians. We have to act for ourselves if we want a better world.

The belief in self emancipation arises from a deep distrust of politicians, statesmen, bureaucrats and others who would claim the right and expertise to run society. Anarchists are cynical of such people whether they are on the right or left of the political spectrum. The absurd socialist position which advocates for example, capturing posts within the state system inevitably ends up with people being at best imprisoned by the system, or more likely, with them being transformed by the system itself. Parliament has tamed every fiery MP that has remained for any prolonged period of time within its walls.

Direct action essentially means taking control of our own lives and action to create a better world without the mediation of political parties and other organisations that would act on our behalf. As anarchists have pointed out for generations, even the most well-intentioned of leaders and organisations become corrupted by power. The sociologist Robert Michels went so far as to speak of an "iron law of oligarchy" which he argued, overcomes the most democratic of representative organisations. The only realistic way to bring about a better world is to do it ourselves.

Anarchists then reject authoritarian, bureaucratic and representative institutions as being opposed to our interests.

Goals

Direct action though, has a more positive character. It enables the oppressed and exploited to gain a self-realisation of of their value and helps bring about self empowerment. Setting and achieving goals actually increases the awareness and self confidence of those in struggle — it is a liberating process in itself. The oppressed, when they engage in struggle develop and discover qualities that they never dreamed they possessed. And, since the struggle is under the control of those directly involved, rather than under outside agents, like union full time agents, it also develops skills of organisation and propaganda. A recent clear example of this is to be found in the thousands of local anti-poll tax groups which sprang up around the country. Starting from scratch, ordinary people created effective local direct action groups which dealt a fatal blow to the poll tax.

Even when struggles end in defeat, they can indicate what methods and tactics should not be used in the future. However, it is the traditional organisations of the working class which are most likely to fail. For example, the trade unions which are run by tired and cynical hacks invariably hold back and limit the struggle. The characterisation of the National Union of Mineworkers as "lions lead by donkeys" is not far from the truth for that and other trade unions.

One of the beauties of doing-it-yourself is that it is an extremely flexible approach which can be used effectively on an individual, group, or mass level. The isolated anarchist, for example, can and should spread the anarchist message, whether by leaflets, stickers, local newsheet, posters etc. It would be wrong, however to fetishise the individual act.

On the collective level people can organise much more effectively, having larger resources and numbers to be able to act on a wider scale. Mass strikes, occupations, riots and other militant forms of revolt are dramatic examples of what is possible given the imagination, motivation and militancy of workers in struggle. Less obvious acts include working to rule, go slows, and sabotage.

A form of direct action which has caused some controversy in the ranks of anarchism is "propaganda by the deed", being distinguished from "propaganda by the word". This has involved political assassinations, bombing, etc and was acclaimed by late nineteenth century anarchists, including for a brief period, Kropotkin. Usually, such acts were carried out by individuals or small groups who were isolated from the mass movement. Assassination of Kings and politicians may have been dramatic but were universally counter-productive in that they provided the state with a counter-revolutionary propaganda weapon and an excuse for repression.

Sometimes, direct action takes forms which herald new revolutionary forms of organisation, embryonic examples of post revolutionary society within the present one. When workers occupy and control factories, they are demonstrating their claim and power over it. The factory committees which sprang up in Russia in 1917 before the Bolshevik counter revolution showed that workers had the ability and inclination to take over production.

Experiment

In many uprisings, the masses themselves have taken over the task of maintaining order in the face of counter revolutionary sabotage and terror. In fact the whole process of revolution is like one huge school of self-emancipation and experiment.

There have been in the twentieth century dramatic examples of working class people rejecting their own forms of political organisation in favour of their own political assemblies. The soviets of Russia in 1905 and 1917 and in Hungary in 1956 immediately come to mind. However, and this is crucial, action in itself is not enough. There has to be a political awareness and consciousness if self-organisation is not to be subverted by the authoritarians. The soviets in 1917 became intoxicated by the radical sounding propaganda of the Bolsheviks and transformed into willing tools of their enemies, the state socialists. A similar development took place in Germany a year later, though this time it was the right-wing Social Democratic Party that side tracked the revolution.

Despite these and other difficulties, there is still no doubt that only direct action by the oppressed can lead to liberation. Freedom has to be taken — and by us in each and every aspect of our lives.

FREEDOM

IN THE NAME OF freedom, the USA has invaded or dominated dozens of countries and regions including Vietnam,Grenada, Nicaragua and El Salvador. In the defence of freedom, Britain imposes martial law on Northern Ireland. Freedom for Hitler meant exterminating Jews, for Stalin it required the invasion of Eastern Europe. Everyone today seems to want freedom. But freedom for pro-capitalist parties cannot, surely, be the same as freedom for anti-capitalists. Has freedom any real value, except as a propaganda weapon to justify self interests?

Definitions

Anarchists take it for granted that freedom is a cental goal. Yet others fear freedom, preferring security to the responsibilities that freedom gives. In capitalism, most of its citizens see freedom as the ability to consume the latest video recorder or music machine — is freedom really about acquiring consumer goods? From the above, it will be clear that there is no one acceptable definition as to what constitutes freedom.

One of the oldest ideas about freedom is that it means being left alone to get on with life without interference. Now this is all very well in a general sense, we don't want to be hindered in our actions but within the context of class societies, this demand merely serves as camouflage to justify inequality. So-called negative freedom which is so much loved by capitalist parties such as the Tories is supposed to apply to everyone. And the law is there to see that it does. This freedom, however, in practice becomes the freedom of the rich to plunder, freedom for businessmen to exploit their workforce, freedom for advertisers to humiliate women and so on. Where there are gross inequalities of

power, freedom serves to maintain that inequality at the expense of the great mass of the population.

Socialists and particularly the Marxist variant are more likely to view freedom in class terms. Now whilst classes exist, it is clear that freedom is a fiction. But have Marxists in power done any better than the capitalists? Marxist-Leninists in power have undoubtedly, as a rule, increased the general education, health and welfare levels of their subject populations.

However, without exception, they have been severely repressive. Using the rhetoric of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" a dictatorship is operated *over* the proletariat. Marxism is an ideology of intellectuals with special "scientific" insights (so they claim) so when given power, such intellectuals use their insights to decide what freedom "really" is for their workers. Marxist-Leninist governments from the Bolsheviks onwards have justified coercing their working class subjects in the name of proletarian freedom. Marxist-Leninist states are without exception class divided societies with severe codes of labour discipline, extensive political police networks and political repression. All Marxist-Leninist states are prison states in which freedom only exists for the ruling class.

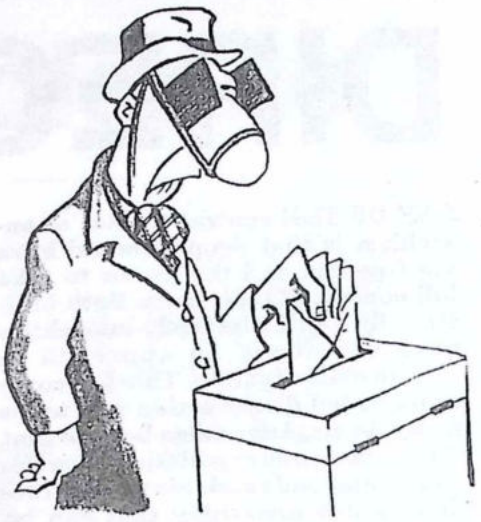
One of the strengths of anarchist communism is that it has not developed some sterile formula of freedom. Freedom is seen as a rich and vital being applicable to all areas of human activity.

(Talking of sterility, did you know that the Marxist definition of freedom is the "recognition of necessity". Make sense of that if you can!) From an anarchist communist perspective freedom is neither seen simply in individual or class terms. There is an intimate interrelationship between the two.

Coercion

Anarchists argue that wherever there are coercive or bureaucratic institutions freedom will be affected. For example, in terms of human relationships, the hierarchical family is usually a patriarchal and adult dominated institution. So called democratic organisations which institutionalise power and authority become oligarchic, either openly through the degeneration of internal structures, or covertly via informal leaderships. On the grand scale, it is the state by means of the legal, bureaucratic and military functions which most effectively curtail freedom. In contemporary society there is a working alliance between all types of coercive institution from the family upwards to maintain order.

Freedom involves the destruction of externally imposed order (and, perhaps, internally imposed self-discipline when this denies human development). To achieve freedom, government from without must be replaced by voluntary cooperation within society. Anarchists have tried to envisage a society in which individual freedom is maximised whilst preserving the freedom of others. Anarchists



argue that individuals should act as they feel fit, so long as they do not interfere to an intolerable degree with the freedom of others. Put differently, freedom has limits, the limit being arrived at when others are exploited, dominated or in some other way harmed. Anarchists generally argue, therefore, that individuals should have full control over their bodies, up to and including, the *right* to suicide.

It is obvious from the foregoing that individual freedom must be seen in the context of wider society. In respect to social freedoms anarchist communists see them as being integrated into community. Freedom is unimaginable outside of community. Since humans are naturally social animals, for freedom to accord with our nature, it must be in a societal context. In contemporary society, community, in the sense of meaningful social solidarity, has been largely destroyed class domination. One of the key tasks of post-capitalist society will be to recreate community to promote personal and social development.

There may arise, however, contradictions between individual and societal goals which anarchist communists argue can to a large degree be overcome through a system of federation. Individuals, local and larger groups of people agree to act in unison so long as it is advantageous. From the individual's point of view, the advantages of voluntarily joining with others are those of communal living e.g. friendships, sexual relationships, support, availibility of goods and services. So long as the individual gains more from participating in society it will be advantageous.

When the disadvantages become intolerable, the individual has the option of "dropping out". From the community's point of view, it has the "right" to defend its collective freedom from individual saboteurs and can seek recourse in expulsion of the anti-social individual.

Freedom in the real world of capitalism and the state is an illusion. In an anarchist communist society with its social equality and solidarity, it at last becomes possible.

Federalism

THOSE ANARCHISTS WHICH make up the major part of the movement are in one *sense* collectivist in the sense that they perceive the anarchist goal as being based upon communities of one sort or another. Anarchist-communists, in particular, envisage freedom and security etc within the context of a solidaristic society. In other words, our goal is not a world of individuals concerned simply with their own well-being, regardless of others but one in which personal freedom can be encouraged and developed for the benefit of all. Freedom comes from, and not in opposition to, community.

It is a misfortune of "collectivist" anarchists that the popular image of anarchism promoted for decades by the mass media is one of isolated individuals bent upon terror. The reality is that in the main, anarchists work in groups and some, like the ACF, seek to build large-scale national and even international organisations. We want a mass anarchist movement. The problems that present themselves, once we reject individualism, is how to organise the movement and, hopefully, a future society which gives the benefits of solidarity with the preservation of individual and collective freedom. How do we, in our revolutionary struggle and the eventual transformation of society, avoid the problems of bureaucracy, elites and power?

To quote from Malatesta, the Italian anarchist, "An anarchist organisation must... allow for complete autonomy and independence and therefore full responsibility to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it is useful to come together for co-operative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfil one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme." (*Il Risveglio*, October 15, 1927) In other words, for an anarchist organisation to operate effectively on a principled basis, its members must combine freedom with responsibility, full participation in the decision-making processes with a commitment to carry out collective decisions. No anarchist organisation can be effective if its members act against the collective aims and methods. Equally, however, no organisation can be anarchist without total freedom to take part in the formulation of goals, aims and methods plus, ultimately, the right to withdraw from this process.

Summit

The usual method adopted by anarchists to combine freedom with organisation has been federalism. This idea is the reversal of the standard form of organisation in which decisions are made at the top by an élite and carried out by the rank and file. Under a federal system autonomous members of the organisation, organised within groups or branches at the base, make the decisions which are carried out by the organisation. Political power flows from the base to the summit, or rather from the circumference to the centre, since organisation is "horizontal" (ie based on equality) not "vertical" (ie based on inequality and hierarchy). In other words, anarchist organisations should be expressions of the collective voice, not directing centres which control people.

The basic "unit" is the member who voluntarily joins the organisation. Usually a member will be part of a local or industrial group which freely agrees to join a larger unit at say the district level. The district grouping is in turn affiliated to a regional body which is part of a national and ultimately international organisation. For example, smaller collectives take responsibility for their immediate areas of concern, involve themselves in other layers of decision-making and are bound by those decisions. A commune might perhaps decide on the location of a new hospital but the damming of a river which has much wider consequences, affecting several communes, would have to be agreed upon by a federation of communes. So long as each "unit" accepts the goals and methods etc it influences the orientation of the organisation. Should a "unit" disagree with decisions reached, it has the right to leave the organisation. However, if it has participated in the decision-making process, to quote Malatesta again, it has a duty "to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme" so long as it remains in the organisation.

For a federal system to operate in an anarchist fashion there must be the greatest possible degree of involvement by members, free communication and blocks to prevent the development of leaders (eg. rotation and recall of any "officials" and ban on full-time posts). Strictly speaking, there should not be any officials as such. Each layer/segment of the organisation represents its views directly through the organisation's press and through temporary elected delegates. However, in the end, the health of any organisation is a reflection of the membership's enthusiasm and commitment.

Not only the anarchist organisation but also the anarchist world society would be run on a federal basis. There would be a multi-compartmental system of decision-making, from again the local to the international sphere. Each unit would have the right to secede and would have the right to self-determination in respect of its own affairs. The basic social unit would probably be the Commune or Soviet which would voluntarily federate to a wider body, say the region or the province. Delegates from the communes would at this next level concern itself with issues relevant to its mandate ie regional issues. The region in turn would affiliate to a national body or its equivalent since we expect artificial "nation-states" to disappear in an international society.

Ideal

So federalism is a straightforward form of organisation which combines the maximum individual and local freedom and autonomy with collective direction. It permits planning on a wide scale on the basis of mutual agreement, whether it be the revolutionary organisation or the anarchist society. Federalism, with its vital right to secession, safeguards the minority from the majority.

However, this is an ideal picture and

federalism alone cannot create or preserve a free society. It must be combined with the elimination of centralised power, hierarchy, authority and inequality. Where these are preserved federalism becomes a sham which would fail its first major test, especially a potential secession.

In theory the Soviet Union was a federation of republics which enjoyed the right of secession. In reality, it was probably the most centralised of twentieth century nations. The self- proclaimed federation of Yugoslavia was (like the USSR) a federation of mutually hostile nations which were united at gunpoint. When in both countries the central authority failed, local nationalisms and rivalries re-emerged and the pseudo-federations disintegrated. These false-federations, based upon social, national and state inequalities, involved none of the essential features of the anarchist vision. Free federation is possible. It is the task of revolutionary anarchists and the working class to create it.

LEADERS

MOST PEOPLE ON the left would argue that 'democracy' is infinitely preferable to fascism and many working class people died in what they saw as a fight against the tyranny of fascism. However, this supposed alternative also takes away our liberty in perhaps a more insidious manner because of the smokescreen it hides behind.

One of the main distinctions between the two is the use of naked force by fascism as opposed to the subtle brainwashing which is used in a democracy. One method is blatant and crude, the other, subtle and sophisticated but achieving the same goal: our passive acceptance of a system that oppresses us. A main part of this menacing strategy is the cult of leadership, a cult which is incompatible with the establishment of a society based on freedom and equality.

In any spectrum of human intelligence, there is a wide range of abilities with most people falling somewhere in the middle, with just a few 'geniuses' and 'idiots'. Therefore, when it comes to transforming society, the collective intelligence, knowledge and experience far outweighs the contribution of a few 'geniuses'.

Despite this wealth of abilities, human history has been marked by the usurpation of struggle and movements for social change by leaders who claim to 'know best'. It has been, and still is, a painful historical struggle of men and women to gain freedom from the political, economic and spiritual shackles which have bound them. But time and time again, having rid themselves of one tyranny, people have replaced it with another. Afraid to use their new found freedom, they hold up their wrists to some new jailer. If anarchist communism is to be achieved and capitalism overthrown, then we must do much more than get rid of the obvious sources of oppresssion. The working class must also transform itself as individuals so as to reject leaders and any new tyranny.

Passivity

It is not surprising that people are so willing to submit to leaders. Capitalist society is organised so as to bleed us of our capacity to think for ourselves and take control of our own lives. This learned passivity manifests itself on the most subtle psychological levels. Individuals have a need to indentify with something so as to gain some kind of recognition and importance. Subcultures within capitalist society such as the Skinheads fulfill this role. There is a dress and hair code that identifies the individual as a member of a group. All the individual has to do to become a part of the group is to conform to the accepted attitudes and behaviour. If the individual begins to question aspects of group behaviour or to challenge the informal leadership structure, then he/she is rejected and loses group membership, a traumatic experience for many. The same analysis could be applied to

ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO LIVE WITHOUT THE BLIND FOLD

many political groups eg the Communist Party in the 1950s. Though groups may profess an antagonism to capitalist society, they actually incorporate and crystallise its values.

The most prevalent manifestation of these latent tendencies is the universal demand for leadership. Schools and youth movements are urged to train children for the 'task of leadership'. Job references need to refer to the applicant's 'leadership qualities'. Workers are asked to chose their leaders in the form of union representatives. Political parties from the Conservatives to the extreme left select their leaders and then voters have to chose which among them is to make decisions for the mass of the population. Thus, the cult of leadership pervades the whole of society.

Initiative

Before we examine what is involved in this general desire for leadership, let us distinquish a quality which is often confused with leadership: individual initiative. This is fundamentally the impulse to originate, to construct and, in relation to others, to elicit their approval. It is a self-expressive impulse which has nothing in common with the will to power. This realisation of the self, the expression of the uniqueness of the individual is one of the most essential features of an anarchist communist society and must be preserved at all costs. However, the individual can only realise him/herself in the community and not in spite of this community. This distinction is important because in the first case the individual becomes part of the pattern of society but does not submerge his/her identity whereas in the second case the individual loses his or her individuality.

We are told we need leaders because there would be no discipline. It is assumed that without anyone telling us what to do, we would not know how to behave. But as anarchists we believe that human beings are naturally cooperative and that it is capitalist society and leaders who foster aggressivity and selfish competition.

We are often drawn to charismatic individuals who we allow to lead us. But we must be aware of the techniques that these individuals employ. Their claim to have the answers to our problems is a sham, the truth hidden behind demagogic rituals.

Another distraction is the claim by many parties on the left that what we need is better leaders. In other words, *they* would make better leaders. But this is another dangerous diversion, for what we need is *no* leaders, not *better* ones.

Unnatural

The social hierarchy that we accept as a natural order is just as unnatural and illogical as government. There are no 'natural' leaders only a ruling class which has grabbed power and uses this power to exploit and dominate the mass of the population. Social classes are not ordained by nature but the historic product of an exploitative society. Unfortunately this acceptance of hierarchy has filtered down to all levels of society and even exists in the organisations that workers create to challenge the system.

Collective responsibility is the alternative to leadership and the counterpart to equality. If we are to succeed in building an anarchist communist society, then the working class must learn to rely on itself. And, each individual in that class must be prepared to take responsibility and participate in the transforming of society. The revolution must therefore be not only against the ruling class but against leaders and hierarchy at all levels of society and most importantly, against our own passivity.

POSTER

Bundles of this poster can be got from the London address. Please send donation. Also available: stickers and a leaflet explaining what is anarchist communism.

TERRORISM

ANARCHISTS HAVE LONG been associated with mindless violence in popular images. We can see *The Secret Agent* on television and often read of "riots lead by anarchists" in newspapers. So what have anarchists done to deserve this? The ruling class have always used 'anarchist' as a term of abuse, even before the anarchist movement arose in the 19th century. Today's rulers never miss an opportunity to slander us either. But anarchists are not entirely without blame. Towards the end of the last century many anarchists became impatient with the slow results of 'propaganda by the word' and developed the theory of 'propaganda by the deed'. At first this was understood as the action of determined groups of revolutionaries by demonstrations, insurrections and other forms of collective direct action to ignite an already potentially revolutionary situation. But in later decades it became identified with individual assassinations. It was thought that if anarchist militants took an active lead and physically attacked members of the ruling class the working class would be inspired to revolution.

Damage

This theory was a total disaster. It left perhaps 20 prominent leaders (who were easily replaced) dead, and the whole anarchist movement severely damaged. Governments were given an excuse to pass repressive laws aimed at smashing the workers' movement and to whip up anti-anarchist hysteria. The Russian anarchist communist Kropotkin, who had been a staunch defender of these tactics was one of the first to realise that they were mistaken. In a series of articles in 1890 he stated that: "One must be with the people, who no longer want isolated acts, but want men (sic) of action inside their ranks." He went on to warn against: "the illusion that one can defeat the coalition of exploiters with a few pounds of explosives". It is clear that as a means towards social revolution, terrorism is a non-starter.

If this is the case, then why do terrorist groups exist today ?

Obvious The obvious answer is that the terrorists of today are not interested in social revolution. Most are involved in 'national liberation' struggles, are marxist-leninists or both. They are usually authoritarian vanguardists of the worst kind. In their own terms these groups are occasionally successful, that is they 'liberate' a country or establish a new dictatorship called 'socialism'. Anarchists should have no time for these would-be bosses of tomorrow. Yet terrorism still holds a fascination for some people who would consider themselves anarchists. These range from the cheerleaders, often seen sporting the T-shirt of their favourite terrorist group, to the action men who think we should take up armed struggle now. Much of this can be explained by impatience and a lack of understanding of what social revolution means. To create an anarchist communist society working class people must destroy the current power structure and take power into their own hands. Terrorist groups do nothing to further this aim. Being a small armed élite they take on the role of a vanguard which will solve people's problems for them. Anarchists should be able to see the flaws in any group which has the arrogance to think it can solve the world's problems by itself. At the very least this can lead to further divisions within the working class — between the terrorist leaders and the passive followers. Instead of encouraging people to think and act for themselves, terrorists seek to control struggles for their own ends. As Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein said: "This is a special message for young people — no hijackings, no joy riding, no stone throwing at the Brits. If you want to do these things, there are organisations to do it for you." Even terrorist groups which claim to be anarchist cannot escape from their vanguardist nature. An 'anarchist' from the June 2nd Movement in West Germany argued "...analysis of imperialism tells us that the struggles no longer start in the metropolis, it's no longer a matter of the working class, but what's needed is a vanguard in the metropolis that declares its solidarity with the liberation movements of the Third World". This is hardly putting forward a libertarian communist position.

Clarify

The work of revolutionaries is to clarify and co-ordinate struggles as a part of the working class. In non-revolutionary periods anarchist communists will be a conscious minority with 'the leadership of ideas'. We must always be pushing for struggles to go as far as possible and be linked up with other movements. However, we should never let ourselves overestimate our own importance and we should never forget that when revolutions do break out revolutionary organisations are often taken by surprise.

Another question which must be addressed when looking at terrorism is the use of violence. By planting bombs in public places terrorists again show their arrogance and a disturbing contempt for human life. In any bombing campaign, whether by air force, car bomb or parcel bomb, there will inevitably be civilian casualties (or collateral damage if the bombing was done by an air force). Whilst this will provide no problem for the authoritarians of governments and terrorist governments in waiting, for revolutionaries this is unacceptable. We reject the random violence of terrorists but we are not pacifists either.

For us, the old violent tactics/non-violent tactics are falsely polarised. Many activities involving mass action do not involve violence, whilst others do. Large demonstrations and strikes can often turn to violence and we should accept the need for self- defence. Groups like the hit squads arising from the miners strike are genuine expression of working class resistance. It would be foolish to sit in ivory towers of idealistic principles condemning this.

As anarchists we must constantly fight in all areas of life to advance the revolutionary process. At times we will need to defend ourselves against the violence of our enemies. But no matter how hard the struggle is, or how frustrated we are in failure, we must never forget the old declaration: "the emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves". Elitist groups of any kind can only be a hindrance to this.

NEW BOOKSHOP

Our Aberystwyth comrades have started a bookshop. Open every day from 10am-5pm at Stall 9, New Mini-Market, St James Square, Aberystwyth.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE WHOLE DEBATE about crime is hopelessly confused and confusing. One thing is certain, in the population at large, there is a fear of crime which politicians, especially the Tories but increasingly Labour, are exploiting for political gain. There is an ever growing demand by reactionaries of all kinds to "get tough with crime". It is an easy slogan to make which guarantees attention but, despite a dozen years of authoritarian Tory control, crime is nowhere near to being defeated. Why is this?

In capitalist society, what crimes actually are is determined by the state. They may, or may not, coincide with what working class people think is wrong behaviour. People 'living' on social security benefits cannot survive on what is available to them. They have either to get involved with some form of 'criminal' behaviour, whether this means social security fraud, shoplifting or worse. And most working class people who have jobs ask few questions when offered goods which have 'fallen off the back of a lorry'.

Their attitudes change when they become the victims of crime. It is an unfortunate fact that some working class people are quite happy to steal from or abuse their own kind. Stealing television sets and videos on council estates or racial or sexual attacks are examples of criminal behaviour which is not acceptable to the working class.

Does this mean that there is a double standard operating here? Not at all. The point about crime is that it must be seen in class terms. Crime is defined and combatted largely by the state acting in the interests of maintaining their order and protecting property. The maintenance of order is presented as being in the interests of all classes but in reality provides stability for the promotion of capitalism. Capitalism itself is based upon a form of robbery: exploitation. But this is not defined by the state as crime. Similarily, we all have personal property to protect but the state is mainly concerned with the protection of private property, ie the instruments of legal robbery — the banks, factories, shops etc. Working class people are generally aware of this. It is a commonplace to hear that there exists "one law for the rich and another for the poor".

So far, from an anarchist communist standpoint, we must be skeptical, to say the least, about the whole debate about crime. We are clear about one thing; anti-social crime, meaning anything which oppresses, robs or does violence to the working class, must be opposed. We cannot wait until 'after the revolution' to fight the active enemies of the people. Racist attacks, sexual assaults, muggings are not acceptable and we have to find solutions to these problems here and now. This will mean vigilence and self-defense by the affected communities. Middle class crimes and assaults on the working class by asset strippers and speculators, though often invisible, are also insidious and must be opposed collectively, where possible, in this long dark night of capitalism. Interestingly, their activities are not often seen by the state as crimes at all, or if they are, they carry relatively light punishments.

Anti-social acts are a direct expression of predatory capitalism. Selfishness, bullying, violence and legalised robbery are all inherent in the system. The tentacles of class society and its ethics have entered into every part of life. It is not accidental that men are responsible for most crimes and that women hardly figure in the crime statistics. Men are socialised from birth to be aggressive, violent, hard and tough, whilst women are socialised to be submissive and caring. This sort of upbringing does untold psychological violence to boys as they are shaped by their parents and society to struggle and fight.

Add to this a strict and regimenting school system, a future of unemployment or dead-end jobs together with boredom and you have a mixture which invites trouble. This is not to excuse macho behaviour but is an attempt to place it in perspective. Crime and capitalism are inseparable.

If crime is a part of capitalist society, what will happen in an anarchist communist society? Anarchist communism is based upon the principles of a classless society in which freedom arises out of community solidarity and an enlightened system of socialisation and education. Private property will be abolished and the goal of production will be for the fulfilment of human need, not the accumulation of private wealth. Goods and services will be planned by the active communities working with similar communities elsewhere. The individual will be encouraged to take part in decision-making. In this way, goods and services will be provided to meet everyone's needs, so far as this is possible. Also, many services will be provided by the community just as public libraries are today, so that entertainment, transport etc will be on the basis of free access.

Moneyless

Communism requires the abolition of money and exploitation. With a moneyless society there will be no possibility to accumulate wealth beyond that which a person can possibly hold on to. Since goods are free, there will be little point in stealing and therefore most, if not all, crimes against property will disappear.

In a caring society which will do away with the desperate struggle for everyday survival, many of the material bases of want will disappear. The revolution will consciously want to eliminate anti-social behaviour and so education and the socialisation of children will be directed towards tolerance, equality and sharing. Violence, which is an ever present undercurrent of life today, will be discouraged through the development of cooperative play and education. The current obsession with aggressive individualism combined with glorification of male assertiveness probably accounts for much of male violence, especially among younger people. Whilst individualism as a means of achieving personal fullfilment is to be encouraged, it must be done so in a positive way. Gain for the individual is a gain for society as a whole. The point of anarchist communism is not to stifle individual effort but to channel it in constructive directions.

In present day society, most people are cut off from their neighbours. Very few real communities survive and those that do are deeply imbued with the values of capitalist society. In an anarchist communist society, community and solidarity will bind society together.

Despite education and other means of socialisation there will be isolated acts of violence, sexual assaults and other anti-social behaviour. Many of these will be carried out by people who are emotionally disturbed. The community has a right to protect itself and steps will have to be taken to eliminate violent and other destructive behaviour. Such people should be cared for as far as possible within the community. This approach has nothing in common with the current dumping of the mentally disturbed onto the streets. In 'face to face' communities everyone will recognise their neighbours and take on a collective and individual responsibility for social care and control. Psychiatric and medical help will be aimed at the integration of disturbed individuals and the promotion of their welfare. There are no easy solutions to some disturbed and obsessive behaviour such as sexual assaults, arson etc. But the approach to such problems will have to be approached in an enlightened, not a punitive way.

This leads us to a discussion of punishment. Punishment, the infliction of violence for so-called crimes, has been a feature of virtually every society from the earliest recorded history. The *Old Testament* approach to punishment in which not only the 'guilty' are harmed but also their relatives and descendents is to be found in many societies. Aspects of this approach have come down to us today in Islamic law and in the Tory government's initiative in blaming and punishing parents for their children's crimes.

There are several justifications given for punishment, all of which are seriously flawed. Revenge is the most primitive, being based on the desire to 'get even' with the criminal. The 'retributive' approach starts from the assumption that individual crimes deserve punishment; murderers deserve to be executed, rapists deserve castration. Apart from the problem of gauging what is an appropriate punishment for each and every crime in a whole range of circumstances, this approach assumes that one act of inflicting pain (robbery, assault etc) is to be condemned whilst another, that of punishment (which might be equally brutal eg stoning of adulterers) is fine. It also accepts that a higher authority, ie the state, has the right alone to inflict punishment.

Linked to the vengeance justification for punishment is the idea of deterrence. Indeed, the two are usually cited together in determining a 'suitable' punishment in the courts. The idea that criminal behaviour will be reduced by the threat of punishment on being caught does not stand up. Firstly, many serious crimes take place on the spur of the moment when people lose self-control through anger, jealousy or drugs. There is no thought of the consequences of such acts.

Secondly, premeditated criminal acts are not deterred by the thought of an eventual punishment. What concerns criminals is the likelihood of getting caught. If such an event seems on balance to be possible, the proposed crime is aborted. A few hundred years ago pick-pockets were executed at public hangings. Active among the enthralled crowds were professional pick-pockets! So much for deterrence.

The idea that society will be better off by carrying out punishments misses the point. An unequal, unfair society creates its own criminality. What needs to be eliminated is the social and economic base for crime. Similarily, the idea of reforming criminals within the prison system is a sick joke. There is precious little enlightenment in Britain's repressive prison regime. In modern Britain, it is not the criminals that need to be 'reformed' but society itself, which needs to be changed, lock, stock and barrel.

PATRIARCHY

A BIG WORD, used by many to describe societies that are ruled by men. Originally it was used to refer to more 'primitive', older cultures, comparing them with the matriarchal (ruled by women) societies that had apparently come before.

The term became popular in the late '60s and '70s with the growth of the women's movement. Instead of talking about capitalist society, which was a sex-neutral term implying the rule of capital, feminists were keen to use a word highlighting the dominant role men played in society. Bosses, military leaders, politicians, rapists, wife beaters, etc, are, for the most part men. Even working class men rule in their own home and upper class women are dependent and subservient to their dominant husbands and fathers. By using the term patriarchy, feminists hoped to challenge the assumption made by revolutionaries of various tendencies: that ending capitalism would automatically end women's oppression. Patriarchy could be used to describe a whole social system. In the '70s and '80s, debates raged as to whether such a social system existed. Traditional leftists in the Marxist organisations denounced the use of the term because it implied that men's oppression of women was more fundamental than the bosses' exploitation of the working class. Women activists accused the political organisations of putting all oppression down to class exploitation, so ignoring the existence of men's role in society as oppressors. Others tried to bridge the gap by using the term patriarchal capitalism, arguing that both sexual oppression and class exploitation were important: "By patriarchy we mean a system in which all women are oppressed, an oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression preceded capitalism, so does our oppression. We do not acknowledge that men are oppressed as a sex although working class men, gay men and black men are oppressed as workers, gays and blacks, an oppression shared by gay, black and working class women." (Editorial statement: *Scarlet Women* 8, Newsletter of the Socialist Feminist Current.

Side Issue

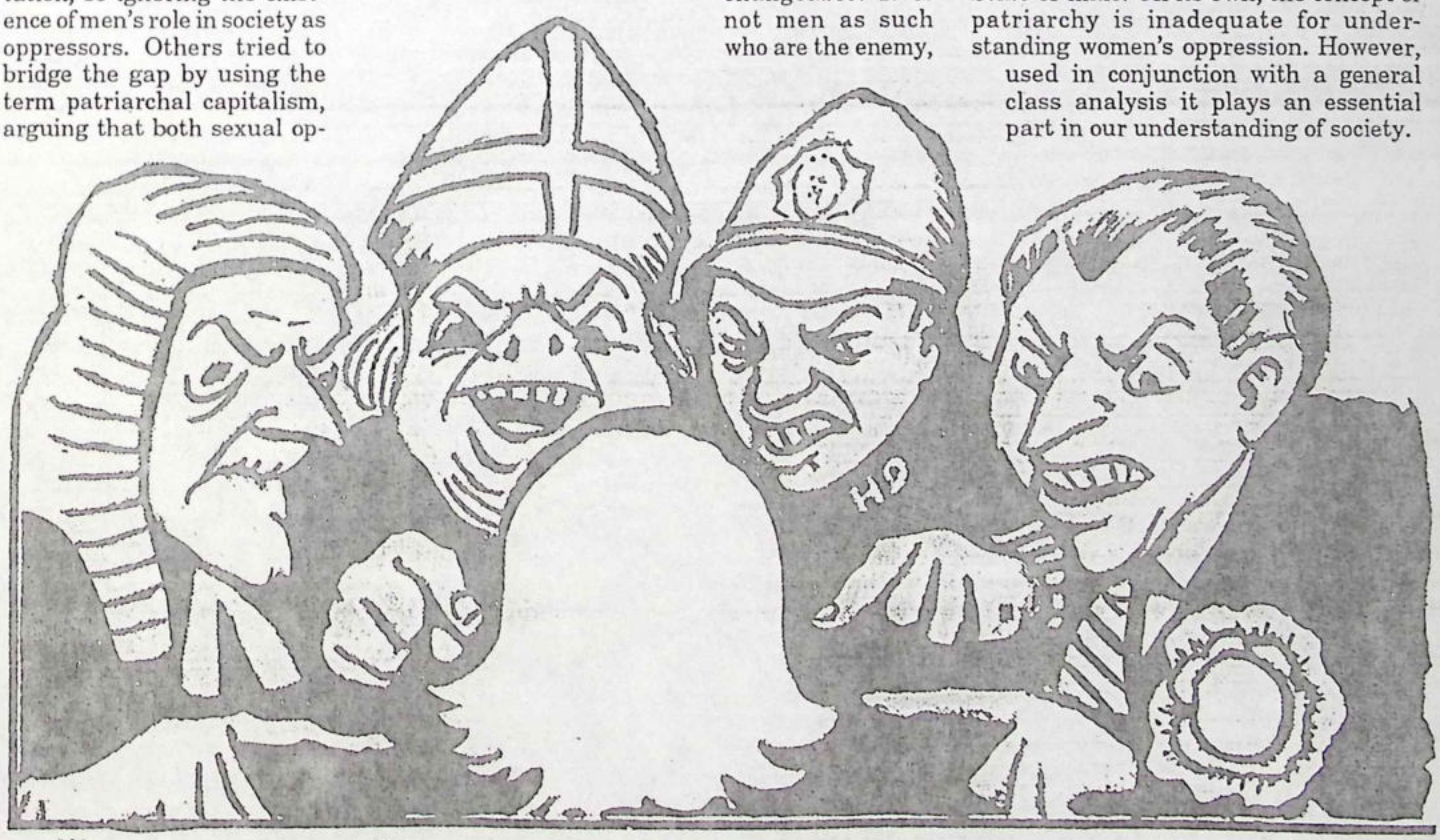
In the end nothing was resolved. In the Leninist organisations, the 'class side' won and women's oppression was once again relegated to a side issue. Many women retreated angrily into separatism, reinforcing the view that men are the key enemy. So where do anarchist communists stand in all this?

Anarchist communists reject the view that women's oppression will end with the overthrow of the bosses and recognise it cannot be explained simply in terms of an economic system. A more complex framework of analysis is needed, recognising the role of ideology and the role of men in keeping women down. For this the concept of patriarchy is useful, though a rather abstract term. This does not mean that male domination is natural or unchangeable. It is not men as such who are the enemy, but the roles of masculinity that they are playing and the power they have. At the same time women's oppression cannot be understood solely in terms of patriarchy, as this fails to address the way capitalism has influenced women's oppression, creating different circumstances for women in different classes as well as giving them differing amounts of power. In the same way that we cannot gloss over differences between men and women within the working class, we cannot gloss over differences between women.

Nevertheless, the concept of patriarchy highlights the fact that women are oppressed and that they are not just oppressed by capital but by men, who have an interest in maintaining this situation.

In some cases it is obvious to see how men benefit from sexism: Men's superior place in the labour market, and the emotional and material benefits they gain from the family. However, men benefit in less obvious ways, as in sexuality, with women bearing the burden of contraception. Anarchist communism is about transforming all areas of life — not just material circumstances. It follows that we need to challenge the whole culture which will involve revolutionising the relations between men and women, liberating both sexes from the traditional roles that we have been brainwashed to play.

This struggle must be part of the general revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism. Capitalism uses the gender differences to its own advantage — the 'macho man' for war and business and the 'feminine woman' for caring, supporting and picking up the pieces. The revolution must be one that ends all power, whether it is that of capital, the State or male. On its own, the concept of patriarchy is inadequate for understanding women's oppression. However, used in conjunction with a general class analysis it plays an essential part in our understanding of society.



INTERNATIONALISM

INTERNATIONALISM, THE solidarity of revolutionaries across national boundaries, is a key part of working class struggle.

The last two hundred years or so has seen national states glorifying patriotism and nationalism. As a tool of social control it has been very effective, indeed millions of people have sacrificed their lives for the national cause.

The First and Second World Wars are just the clearest examples of a continual process of aggression carried out by nation states against their rivals.

Collapse

As Leninist 'communism' has collapsed all over the world, the ideological gap has been to a large extent filled by nationalism. This is carried to an absurd degree in countries like the former Yugoslavia, where statelet confronts statelet, all in the name of national pride and self-determination.

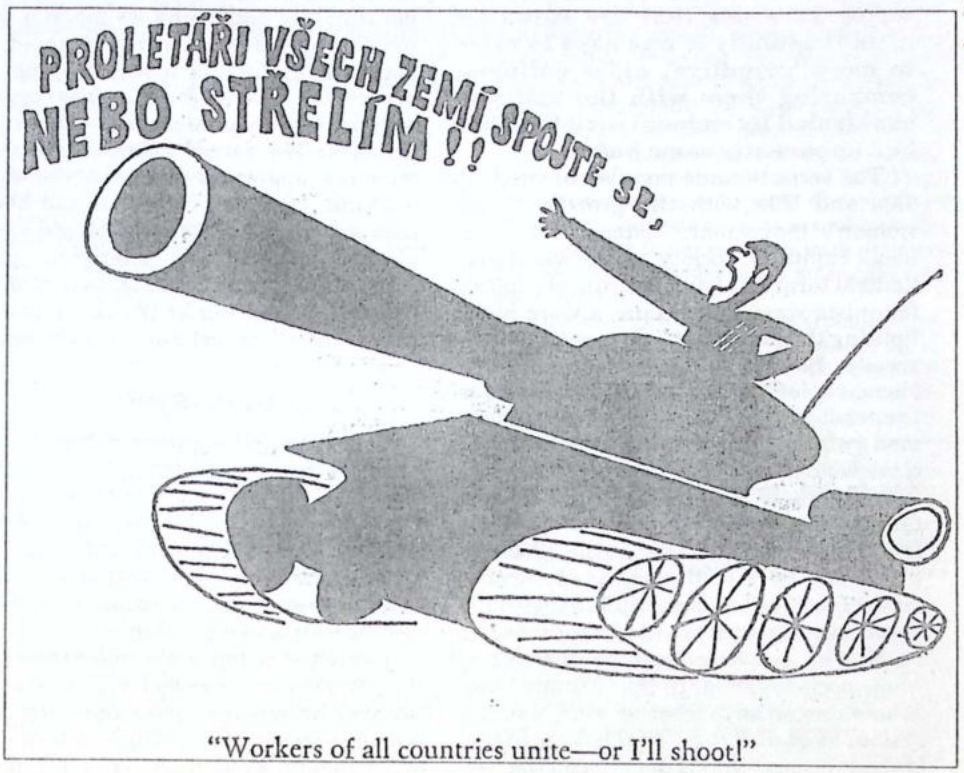
Yet this nationalism which has been so powerful in the 20th century goes against the whole development of capitalism. If nothing else, capitalism is internationalist, at least as far as the major corporations are concerned. These enterprises are huge, employ hundreds of thousands of workers in several countries and often possess capital in excess of some of the world's second rank nations. Firms like ICI, Esso, General Motors, Coca Cola, Sony etc., whilst being based within nation states, owe no country loyalty. Their goal is growth and increased profits. They are unwilling to be held back by mere national governments.

Partly in recognition of this fact of capitalist life and partly to secure the domination of the world's markets, once again major imperialist rivalries are beginning to emerge. The Canadian-USA-Mexican free trade agreement, the EC, and the courting by Japan of countries around the Pacific Rim, are all aimed at securing domination of the world's markets.

Unity

For these reasons alone, it is vital that the revolutionary working class movement looks for unity. However, workers' internationalism is not simply a response to the international threat of capitalism. Internationalism dates back to the 19th century, especially to the formation of the International Workingmen's (sic) Association (The First International).

There was a recognition of the need for international revolution and thus the necessity of an internationally-organised revolutionary movement. Despite the cynical manipulation of socialists such as Marx, who preferred to wreck the First International rather than let it fall under the influence of the anarchist Bakunin's supporters, and the patriotism and chauvinism displayed by the social democratic parties which wrecked the Second International on the eve of the Great War, internationalism has been a continuing threat.



"Workers of all countries unite—or I'll shoot!"

Lenin's Third Internationalism was a tool of the Bolsheviks, becoming under Stalin a shameless conveyor belt for Soviet foreign policy.

These pseudo-internationalisms do not invalidate the necessity of international solidarity, they make it all the more vital. Unlike capitalism which seeks conformity on a world scale — Big Macs and Pepsi from New York to Peking — internationalism welcomes and supports the diversities of peoples. It is anti-racist and advocates a unity based on the recognition and celebration of our differences and similarities. Internationalism is a positive statement about the solidarity of all exploited and oppressed working people.

End

Internationalism is also a tactical device to enable the revolutionary working class to overthrow capitalism. If capitalism is internationalist, so must be the working class.

Given the wide differences in economic development between nations, it would be surprising to find revolution breaking out on a world scale simultaneously.

No, far more likely will be revolutions occurring within the national boundaries. Then, international solidarity becomes vital to defend the isolated revolution and to spread it onto a wider and wider scale.

Revolution

We should not fall into the trap of believing that revolutions must necessarily succumb to the forces of world imperialism. Just because the USA, for example, has a vast arsenal at its disposal, does not mean that it can use it, or that, if used, it can be effective.

The recent example of the USA's inability to defeat the warlord Aideed in impoverished Somalia is an example of the limitations of armed intervention. So, the young working class revolution, even if initially restricted to one or two countries has a good chance of success, if there is international working class support. Such support might include strikes, boycotts and agitation for revolution on the 'home front'.

Finally, internationalism is not only a means to the end of revolution. It is an end in itself, in the sense that national barriers and parochialism will be broken down.

There will be an international federation of peoples. For the first time the world will belong to no-one and everyone. Long live the International!

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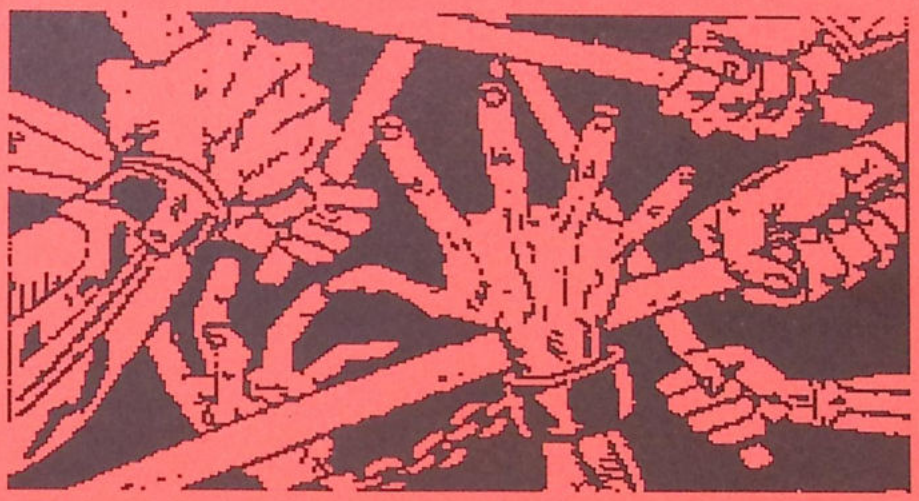
ASPECTS OF ANARCHISM



Thoughts and commentary on some of the most important issues that anarchists must confront, from an anarchist communist perspective

Anarchist Federation

£1.00 (free to prisoners)

Previously published in *Organise! The Magazine of Revolutionary Anarchism* 1990-1995

Introduction

This pamphlet comprises a series of short articles that originally appeared in our magazine, *Organise!,* between 1990 and 1995.

The articles taken together provide a useful introduction to what we mean when we talk about anarchist communism. They provide readers with an outline of our basic views and opinions. Obviously some of them refer to issues that were current when they were written and so can appear a little dated today. We could have made changes to bring them up-to-date, however as any alterations would themselves have become obsolete fairly quickly, we felt it best to leave the articles unchanged.

If you want to find out more, we can be contacted by writing to the Anarchist Federation, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or by email to anarchistfederation@bigfoot.com. Our web address is www.afed.org.uk.

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1. ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

ANARCHIST COMMUNISM is a distinct body of revolutionary social and political ideas. It offers a radical alternative to the statist belief systems which have proved their bankruptcy in the twentieth century.

Marxism, in both its Bolshevik and social democratic varieties, has proved a disastrous failure. Socialism, and the other ideologies based upon capitalism such as fascism and liberal democracy have proved overtly murderous or hypocritically so. Only anarchist communism remains to be tested as a fully coherent approach to organising the world. As the second millennium passed, its last century saw the almost unrestrained rise of the State and with it virtually continuous warfare - plunder dressed up as the "global economy" and ecological devastation. The people of the world today deserve much more than has been available to the great majority so far.

The rise of capitalism, the technological state and imperialism are eliminating the human factor from social life. The individual in the advanced industrialised state is removed from the community and isolated in concrete boxes, with television as the main link to the world outside. The poor majority in Africa, Latin America and Asia struggle to survive as their way of life is increasingly dictated by the needs of an insatiable global economy, with their own elites encouraging and benefiting from this exploitation. Racism and nationalism are if anything stronger, stirred up by various elements in the ruling class and taken up by many people in the working class as they see can see no other answer to their problems. Women are under attack world-wide with the rise of religious fundamentalism and the generalised obsession with the "decline of the family" and "moral values".

Anarchist communism is the alternative. It places the individual at the centre of its approach, for only active, thinking persons can ever be free. However, the individual does not exist apart from the rest of humanity. Capitalist exploitation whilst destroying "natural" communities has created and is creating social solidarity on the basis of class identity and reality, where people choose to identify with each other rather than being forced into a community because of tradition. The ruling classes of the world are waging a desperate class war against numerically-vast populations of workers and peasants. In the search for profits the producing classes are subject to ever-more savage assaults. But it is out of this struggle between exploiter and exploited, between the oppressors and the oppressed, that the mass of the population will achieve human freedom. Social revolution is the only way of achieving this liberation.

A Utopian Dream

Anarchist communism is often attacked as being a utopian dream since it is both anti-capitalist and anti-state. The argument goes that both of these are necessary because of "human nature". Won't new forms of exploitation and new classes arise? Isn't it inevitable that some people have more power than others? Isn't the state necessary to keep order? We say a loud "no!" to these arguments. Within the general context of a stateless and moneyless society, the new society will create communities and other social relations which will be expressions of individual and social desires. There is no antagonism here between the individual and the collective for two reasons. Firstly, the individual belongs to and survives within the context of the collective, so the affinity groups, co-operatives, industrial and neighbourhood councils which will act as the social means of organising and acting in society will simply be extensions of the individual within society. Secondly, all systems and groups established to get things done will have built into them a number of devices preventing the abuse of power. They will be assemblies of those people directly involved, affected by or with an interest in whatever is being done or proposed and should any form of delegation be necessary then the delegates will be directly elected, easily-removable and temporary.

Also, given the development of communications technology, mass participation, either within a popular assembly or via linkups of local groups and individuals, will be possible. Society will depend of full access to and communication of information. The assemblies at the local, district or regional levels will be able to plan for the future on the basis of input from participation at various stages of the peoples' assemblies. We've used a territorial example here but the principle could apply to all forms of co-operation and work-in-solidarity, no matter where it happens. Given that there will be no coercive state apparatus to enforce decisions made within the various popular organisations, there will be no physical imposing of undesirable options. The aim throughout will be to achieve results on the basis of consensus and compromise.

Anarchist communist society will be a moneyless society. Goods and services will be made available on the basis of need with society as a whole determining priorities for production and levels of consumption. People will need to think about and plan this but the horror stories of 'feeding frenzies' or people stockpiling goods are sheer fantasies. There is a limit to the number of things that people can consume, possessiveness will become an aberration not the norm, there will be no 'wealth' to accumulate, no advertising to over-stimulate demand and education about the benefits of sharing, solidarity and co-operation; all will naturally limit demand and allow production and consumption to be balanced. One of the functions of money is to act as a "store of value". This allows individuals in capitalist societies to accumulate enormous sums well in excess of what they can ever spend. In a moneyless society there is no mean accumulating wealth, thus creating another obstacle to the re-emergence of a ruling class.

It may be objected that this basis of social organisation is fine for local village-sized populations but is unworkable on a large scale. However, there is no reason why it could not operate on a larger scale if it is based on the principles of voluntary co-operation and federation, which would still allow for freedom and solidarity. Even within capitalism huge organisations and corporations are often little more than conglomerations of small groups organised within a given managerial structure. Local small-scale efforts are channeled in a particular direction. There is no reason those efforts could not be organised voluntarily for the common and individual good with the initiative coming from below.

For an anarchist communist society to operate effectively, education in the widest sense must prioritise a socialisation stressing personal growth, a love of freedom together with a sense of responsibility, and solidarity. Capitalist education has effectively gained an acceptance amongst most of the population of a system that exploits them through a subtle process of brainwashing and a distortion of the natural tendency towards social solidarity by stressing patriotism, nationalism or loyalty to the company. An anarchist communist approach to education would allow the natural tendencies to develop so that individuals would he able effectively to participate in the new society with confidence and the mutual respect that comes from a desire to associate and co-operate.

Most other ideologies aim to dominate and control nature and indeed the last centuries have witnessed a total transformation of the natural world as it has been twisted and distorted to fit the supposed needs of human beings. Now nature is giving its reply, to such an extent that the very existence of humanity is threatened. Anarchist communism seeks to work in harm with natural forces, utilising appropriate levels of technology to meet people's needs. There are enough resources on the planet to provide a living for all, without destroying the planet in the process.

Anarchist communism is the only ideology which challenges all exploitation and oppression, whether it be of workers by bosses, women by men or the environment by human beings. It alone emphasises both freedom of the individual and solidarity within the community and struggles for a society which is free of both economic exploitation and the oppressive state. Anarchist communism alone can point the way forward to survival and well-being.

2. FREEDOM

IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM, the USA has invaded or dominated dozens of countries and regions including Vietnam, Grenada, Nicaragua and El Salvador. In the defence of freedom, Britain imposes martial law on Northern Ireland. Freedom for Hitler meant exterminating Jews, for Stalin it required the invasion of Eastern Europe. Everyone today seems to want freedom. But freedom for capitalist states, corporations and parties surely cannot be the same as freedom for anti-capitalists. As these examples show, there appears to be no one acceptable definition of 'freedom'. Has freedom any real value, except as a propaganda weapon to justify self-interest?

Definitions

Anarchists take it for granted that freedom is vital to humanity. Yet others fear freedom, preferring security to the responsibilities that freedom gives. Under capitalism most citizens see freedom as the ability to consume the latest video recorder or music machine - is freedom really about acquiring consumer goods? One of the oldest ideas about freedom is that it means being left alone to get on with life without interference. Now this is all very well in a general sense, no-one likes to be constrained or hindered. But within the context of class societies, this demand serves as camouflage to justify inequality. So-called 'negative freedom' (the absence of constraining laws) much loved by libertarian and capitalist parties is supposed to benefit everyone. In practice this freedom is the freedom of the rich to plunder the poor, of freedom for businessmen to exploit their workforce, for advertisers to humiliate women and so on. Such freedoms to exploit and mistreat are often protected by laws passed by the powerful to protect their privileges. Where there are gross inequalities of power, freedom only maintains inequality at the expense of the great mass of the population.

Socialists, and particularly the Marxist variety, are more likely to view freedom in class terms. Now whilst classes exist, it is clear that freedom is a fiction. But have Marxists in power done any better than the capitalists? Without exception they have been severely repressive. Using the rhetoric of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the party tries to exert total control over the proletariat (the workers). Marxism is an ideology of intellectuals with special "scientific" insights (so they claim). When given power such intellectuals use their insights to decide the kinds of 'freedom' people will enjoy. Marxist-Leninist states are without exception class divided societies with severe codes of labour discipline, extensive political police networks and political repression. All Marxist-Leninist states are prison states in which freedom only exists for the ruling class. This is not ancient history – the heirs of these parties and governments are still around today, seeking the chance to take power. One of the strengths of anarchist communism is that it has not developed a sterile formula for freedom. Freedom is seen as a rich and vital element applicable to all areas of human activity. From an anarchist communist perspective, freedom exists in both individual and social terms - there is an intimate interrelationship between the two.

Coercion

Anarchists argue that wherever there are coercive or bureaucratic institutions freedom will be affected. In human relationships, the hierarchical family is usually a patriarchal and adult-dominated institution. So called democratic organisations that institutionalise power and authority become oligarchic, either openly through the degeneration of internal structures or covertly via informal leaderships. On a grander scale, the state curtails freedom (to benefit the ruling class) by means of the legal, bureaucratic and military systems it maintains. In contemporary society there is a working alliance between all types of coercive institutions to maintain order, from the family upwards. Freedom involves the destruction of externally imposed order (and, perhaps, internally imposed self-discipline when this denies human development). To achieve freedom, government from without must be replaced by voluntary co-peration within society. Anarchists envisaged a society in which individual freedom is maximised whilst preserving the freedom of others. Anarchists argue that individuals should act as they feel fit, so long as they do not interfere to an intolerable degree with the freedom of others. Put differently, freedom has limits, the limit being arrived at when others are exploited, dominated or in some other way harmed.

Since humans are naturally social animals, for freedom to accord with our nature, it must be in a societal context. In respect to social freedoms anarchist communists see them as being integrated within community. Freedom is unimaginable outside of community. In contemporary society, community, in the sense of meaningful social solidarity, has been largely destroyed class domination. One of the key tasks of post-capitalist society will be to recreate community to promote personal and social development. There may arise, however, contradictions between individual and societal goals which anarchist communists argue can to a large degree he overcome through a system of federation. Individuals, local and larger groups of people agree to act in unison so long as it is advantageous. From the individual's point of view, the advantages of voluntarily joining with others are those of communal living e.g. friendships sexual relationships, support, availability of goods and services. So long as the individual gains more from participating in society it will be advantageous. When the disadvantages become in tolerable, the individual has the option of 'dropping out'. From the community's point of view, it has the "right" to defend its collective freedom from individual saboteurs and can seek recourse in expulsion of the anti-social individual. Given that the vast majority of us will want the benefits social life and society bring, it is important we begin to work out and act out the balance between the individual and community, in both thought and action.

Freedom in the real world of capitalism and the state is an illusion. In an anarchist communist society, with its social equality and solidarity, it at last becomes possible.

3. CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

THE AIM OF ANARCHISM is to obtain a free and equal society. For anarchists now the biggest problem is how to achieve the transformation from the present capitalist world to an anarchist one. Anarchists are a tiny minority throughout the globe but we believe that an anarchist society will be to the benefit of all humanity. Since we think that anarchism is objectively in the interest of all, many people question the emphasis on class struggle to achieve a revolution. Here we will try to explain the Anarchist Communist analysis of class and the need for class consciousness amongst the working class if anarchist ideas are to triumph.

Much confusion is caused by the concept of class. This is not the place to examine the myriad economic, sociological and psychological definitions, all of which have important insights to offer in the analysis of present society. Instead we will concentrate on the Anarchist Communist political definition which holds that the working class for, want of a better term, includes the vast majority of the world's population who are oppressed and exploited by a tiny minority of rulers, the Boss Class, who order them about and live off the produce of their labour. These are not precise terms and it is not to label individuals as belonging to one class or the other, nor should it be. Class is a collective entity and can only exist in the context of a social whole. We identify the working class as the prime agent in changing society because of its numerical and productive collective strength and the obvious fact that those poorer and more oppressed have more to gain and less to lose in overthrowing capitalism and are therefore more likely to do so. However to gain that result what we describe as the working class must recognise themselves for what they are and how they stand in relation to the bosses. As Marx correctly said, only the class, conscious of itself, can achieve the revolution.

Consciousness and The Individual

For anarchists the implication of this is that the revolution cannot be carried out on behalf of the working class by an "enlightened" majority acting in its name. This does not imply, as many well meaning anarchist "educationalists" proclaim, that the vast majority of individuals must become convinced of anarchist politics before we can act to implement anarchism. Class consciousness is not a product of individual commitment but an ideological transformation effecting every aspect of social interaction. It will be reached not when everyone can quote Bakunin and Malatesta ad infinitum but when the working class recognises itself as such and libertarian forms of organisation are seen as both possible and the natural way to run our lives. To bring this sense of class consciousness into being, anarchists must simultaneously work to break down the ideological domination of capitalist ideas, and struggle as part of our class against capitalism in practice. The first of these we do by spreading anarchist ideas and by exposing the false values of liberalism, democracy, labourism etc for what they are, excuses to justify the rule and privilege of a small elite. Anarchism in turn gains from this by learning from the experience of the working class from which all anarchist theory ultimately derives- the concept of anarchists advocating workers councils is a good example of this. Participation in the class struggle comes naturally to anarchists as we are not only struggling against our own oppression but recognise that as one aspect of a whole oppressive system which generates solidarity with others in the same position. This natural desire to fight back has the added good of showing the rest of our class what anarchism is really about rather than the lies and myths spread by the media. These two strands of anarchist activity are entwined as better ideas make us more effective in action and involvement in struggle leads to better ideas.

It is important to realise that continuous anarchist activity will not lead inexorably to the growth of class consciousness. Capitalism is continually reinventing itself to ensure its own survival. Not only does it rubbish libertarian communist ideas and reinforce its own ideological stance through the education system, the media etc but it always aims to co-opt movements of resistance into its own system. The trade unions, Marxist-Leninist parties, even the Labour Party all started out to challenge capitalism, even if only in a tame way, and all have ended up as part of its structure or an alternative form of capitalism. The class consciousness we wish to create must be such that it not only stands opposed to the present system but must be capable of controlling those who will use the class struggle to achieve power for themselves. To this end an emerging Class Consciousness must manifest itself as more than an vague feeling amongst our class but express itself in organisation on

libertarian principles not least in a coherent and united anarchist movement. The ideas and practice of the Anarchist Federation are one step on this road.

4. ORGANISATION

WHAT IS 'ORGANISATION'? It's a vast subject so let's think about one kind of organisation relevant to anarchists. This is the 'Revolutionary Organisation'. Each kind of organisation has its own purpose enabling people to accomplish what they cannot individually, harnessing energy and resources in productive ways. However organisations are not pure rational constructs. They have their own culture, often obscured by formal structures. Strip away the theoretical organisation of states, corporations and political parties and you reveal the hierarchy, authority, fear and greed that is true organisation in a capitalist society. Because of this some anarchists reject not only the 'ordering' imposed on our minds by capitalist society but all forms of organisation. We in the Anarchist Federation recognise the problems of organisation but accept that it is necessary both in and in achieving a libertarian society. What is important is to make organisations that reflect the ideas of anarchist communism in their own practice.

Determination and Solidarity

To create effective organisations we must know our own and other's minds, therefore there must be a high degree of communication, of sharing. We must set about creating aspiration, setting achievable targets, celebrating success, rededicating ourselves again and again to the reasons why we have formed or participate in the organisation. And because organisation is a mutual, sharing activity these things cannot be contained within one mind or merely thought but acted out and given a tangible existence through words and actions. At the same time, we must remain individuals, capable of independent and objective appraisal, not cogs in some vast machine.

What then is the purpose of 'revolutionary organisation' ? Can it be described ? Given that the need for revolution already exists, revolutionary organisation must increase the demand for revolution. It must increase the measurable 'weight' or 'force' of the resources joined to demand revolution. The structure must increase the ability of the organisation to perpetuate itself while its ends remain un-realised. It must increase the ability of the organisation to resist attack, by increasing the determination and solidarity of members and by so arranging itself that damage caused to it (from external attacks, defections, internal conflicts and so on) are minimised. It must be flexible, be able to absorb or deflect change or challenges to it, have the ability to change or cease as circumstances dictate and the self-knowledge to initiate change when change is required. High levels of positive communication, mutual respect and celebration, shared aspirations and solidarity all describe the revolutionary organisation.

Creating a Revolutionary Structure

Anarchists in a free society will be self-ordering and society will be self-regulating. The organisations we construct will arise out of the needs of the moment, filtered by our knowledge and perceptions. Organisations, whether free associations, collectives, federations, communes or 'families' will be fluid and flexible but retain the ability to persist. They will be responsive to individual and social need. They will have a structure and culture matching the needs, beliefs and purpose of members. They will not have the super-ordered, monolithic or divergent cultures of competition, fragmentation, subordination or conflict that exist within organisations today. Creating organisations that have a revolutionary structure is an act of revolution itself. The more we do it, successfully, the better we will be at making the revolution and the closer we will be to achieving revolution. But to be successful we have to learn far more about the nature of organisations, what is effective communication and how we respond to demands for change.

The Anarchist Federation is one attempt to put these ideas into a practical form. We do not claim to have all the answers, but we are convinced that anarchist communism can only hope to make real progress as the leading idea in a united revolutionary movement. Working as an organisation has made our interventions in the class struggle stronger and our ideas clearer than they could be alone or in local groups, and though we still have a long and hard road to travel, ever increasing co-ordination is unmistakably the way forward. A powerful revolutionary organisation will not come about by people simply agreeing with each other. Only through the dynamics of working together can we achieve the unity of activity and theory necessary to bring about a free and equal society.

"Anarchism is organisation, organisation and more organisation", Malatesta

5. SOLIDARITY

THE IDEA THAT THE INDIVIDUAL is of supreme importance is only a relatively recent development in historical terms. For most of human history, belonging to a group took precedence as people identified with the tribe, the clan, the family and locality. Social solidarity was what counted and acts committed by individuals were perceived to be the responsibility of the wider social groupings to which they belonged. Blood feuds, for example, which involved warring extended families, often arose from the action of a single individual but carried collective responsibility. Unlike modern capitalism, which tends to isolate individuals, pre-capitalist systems tended to incorporate them. People were bound together through a variety of social ties. This social solidarity was once a normal and universal form of relationship, though not the only one people shared.

Natural

Insofar as individuals find it extremely difficult to live in total isolation, it is surely possible to agree that social solidarity is natural. Human beings are social animals who find it beneficial to co-operate and necessary to associate with each other. Even within modern industrial societies, the urge to belong to some community or other seems overwhelming. In the fight against exploitation and oppression within the capitalist system, people have always recognized the need for solidarity in order to win even basic demands. From the beginning of the 19th Century, striking workers and those undertaking social struggles such as rent strikes or campaigns for better housing or sanitation understood the power of standing together and tried to create and maintain the greatest degree of unity in order to beat those who opposed them. The tension between capitalism's self-serving individualism and the need for united action by the working class has been one of the main preoccupations of workers in struggle. The rights of the individual (to act within the law as they think fit no matter what the cost) has been consistently proclaimed by employers and governments precisely to break the strength of the organised working class. When if you did not work, you starved, the 'scab labourer' who took your job while you were on strike was the most hated person in working class communities. How much easier to encourage people to 'scab' when the right to work and to act in one's own best interests is championed by government ministers and enforced by police truncheons. The best kind of solidarity is, of course, of all people with all other people. Anarchist communists have always struggled to create this kind of solidarity no matter what artificial difference is maintained to divide us. Because we work for working for working class unity we oppose those unions who pit one worker against another (for instance white collar vs manuals, unskilled vs craftsmen, employed vs unemployed). Trade unions act as a barrier to wider solidarity since their main concern is a particular craft, occupation or industry. Sectionalism, meaning a divided workforce, has always been a feature of trade unionism in Britain, a fact maintained by union bosses and welcomed by employers.

Powerful

Solidarity on a mass scale can be tremendously powerful. During the General Strike of 1926, sympathy and support for the locked-out miners was so great that there was no strike-breaking at all from within the working class – the ruling class had to do essential jobs themselves, policemen, soldiers and college students driving trams and moving coal! Such solidarity was extremely powerful, so powerful that the union bosses feared it might escape their control. Though terrifying the government as the months of strike went by, it was the union leaders who called off the strike when the legitimacy of a government that would not meet the worker's just demands began to be questioned. Without a government, the cozy lives of the union leaders would disappear; they would rather millions suffered lower wages and worse conditions than surrender their privileges to the solidarity of working class people. The failure to achieve solidarity of purpose and action usually has dire consequences. During the 1984 Miner's Strike, internal dissension within the union's ranks and lack of significant support outside seriously weakened the struggle to preserve the mining industry, hundreds of thousands of jobs and hundreds of coalfield communities. If solidarity is important for struggles which are of a defensive and limited nature within capitalism, then it is clear that in order to overthrow the system, the widest and most determined unity is going to be essential. Failure to involve the great mass of working class people and at least neutralize most others will lead either to quick defeat or civil war. The greater the cohesion and solidarity of people and their struggle, the easier will be the task of creating post-revolutionary anarchism, the free society.

The Individual In Society

An anarchist society by definition requires the absence of government. Anarchists also seek an end to *all* coercive institutions and relationships. What replaces them, and allows millions of people to live and work in relative harmony without laws, governments and police? Part of the answer must lie in the creation of networks of social groups which meet the needs of individuals and with strong bonds within them and between the groups. We must be a society of individuals and of social groups.

While the danger exists that social pressures will narrow the area of personal freedom, these will be countered by libertarian education and socialization, the creation of a desire, a hunger if you like, for personal expression and fulfillment amongst all people. We will also need to create social structures and dynamics which promote the greatest possible degree of personal autonomy. Anarchist communists believe that social solidarity is simply the most 'natural' form of living in the world. Anarchy will not be an amalgamation of unconnected, isolated individuals, but a dynamic solidarity in which people interact on the basis of freedom and equality.

6. RIGHTS

RIGHTS constantly crop up in our lives. Almost all debate and choice about what we can or cannot do is coloured by talk about different rights. Natural Rights, Human Rights, Children's Rights, Animal Rights, the Right to Life, The Right to Die, the Right to Know, the Right to Privacy and endless others. All are appeals for people to get what they deserve and what they are entitled to. Collectively rights amount to a universal fairness, which, if only they were all respected, would leave no one with cause for complaint. All that is needed for any disputes in society to be resolved is for conflicting rights to be weighed against one another and the most equitable solution found. It will not surprise our readers that we think this view is utter rubbish and we tend to agree with the philosopher Jeremy Bentham who said that natural rights were a "nonsense upon stilts". This article takes a very brief look at rights, critiques what's wrong with them and sets out what anarchists can use as an alternative in political dialogue. Obviously we are not going to say that changing the theoretical framework of political discussion can bring revolutionary change in itself. However we do say there is an interchange between ideas and practice which grow from one

another. Rejecting campaigns for our 'rights' enables us to see beyond immediate goals inside the confines of present society just as actual struggles have shown us the need to go beyond what the bosses can concede in terms of rights.

Are Rights Right On?

The question of rights became a major political influence with the American and French Revolutions and has since expanded to almost all aspects of human interaction. One distinction worth making is between positive and negative rights. The latter are rights which allow individuals freedom from interference from the state. These rights, mostly advocated by ideological liberals, were in general the first to be put forward e.g. the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the American constitution. Positive rights have come later, pushed for by state socialists and Keynesian capitalists. They differ in requiring action by others or the state to ensure their fulfillment. An example is the right to work. To 'enjoy' this right someone must provide a job for you to do. The distinction between these two types of rights is by no means clear cut and they are united by the justification for their existence. All these claims of rights rest on being part of a natural order with which human society should conform, hence the term 'natural rights'.

What's Wrong With Rights?

Logically there are gaping holes in the theory of rights. Firstly there is no evidence that rights exist as part of a supposed natural order. Even if they did, to move from what actually is to what ought to be is not necessarily so (naturalistic fallacy if you want to know G.E Moore about it). For example it is natural for people to die of disease but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to cure the sick. Secondly, rights accruing to certain groups have problems of demarcation. Do human rights extend to fetuses? Do animal rights extend to non-vertebrates? However to anarchists these are minor quibbles. Our objection to rights rests on their political content. Rights are only of use if they can be enforced. To which we must ask - who decides what rights there are and who will make sure they are put into effect? This cannot be simply side-stepped by more 'democratic' or anarchist forms of decision making. The idea of rights presupposes that there is a correct answer to be discovered and that makes it an issue for experts. Anarchists do not believe that there are factual answers to how people interact. It effects everyone in a community and everyone should participate in the decision making process. No one is greater expert on you than yourself. Of course if you want to build a house you would be foolish not to consult people with expertise in architecture or bricklaying but they have no greater knowledge than anyone else in the community as to whether a house needs to be built. These types of decision can be blurred on occasion but with rights we can see a definite difference. Rights are the product of a hierarchical society. If you are in dispute with someone over a clash of rights you must appeal to a higher authority. When decisions go against people in British courts they go to the European Court of Human Rights. Regardless of whether they win or lose they have surrendered control of their own lives to someone else. We are not saying that the idea of rights is a manipulative con by capitalism to divert rebellion into acceptable channels but it is a product of capitalist, individualistic and authoritarian thinking which cannot serve as the basis for a society of freedom and equality.

Right On!

What can be done about this? Obviously we shouldn't give up what practical rights the bosses have conceded to us in the present. In fact they should get a hearty kicking for even thinking about taking away our rights to pensions, striking, free abortion etc. Unfortunately they've already done most of that if we ever had it anyway. We need somehow to gain power for ourselves that they can't take away. Without speculating overmuch on a future anarchist society we can see some key features of it emerging through the struggles of our own class in the here and now. One of these is the kind of arguments we use in settling points of controversy between us. Anarchism rejects opinions that rely for their justification on what is 'naturally' the case or on someone's judgment simply because of who they are. Instead we aim at a leadership of ideas that convince people because of their own merits. Real decisions about people's lives cannot be resolved fruitfully by recourse to abstract categories, however benign they may appear. To place our faith in rights is to abdicate responsibility for our own decisions and surrender to a tyranny subtler but more all embracing than the cosh.

7. COLLECTIVE ACTION

CONTRARY TO POPULAR PREJUDICE, fostered by both media caricatures and by the antics of a small number of self-proclaimed 'anarchists', anarchism is neither 'rugged individualism' nor individualistic rebellion. Whilst anarchists argue that the realization of individual freedom is central to any authentically revolutionary politics, we don't equate this fundamental freedom with the right of individuals to manifest their ego without regard for social totality. More importantly, it is our belief that it is *collective* action which creates change and is essential to anarchism rather than the activity of isolated and atomized individuals.

The Fallacy of Individualism

This is such common sense that it should not require comment but so often individualism is regarded as the bedrock of anarchism rather than its actual opposite. That is not to say, of course, that social anarchists, especially anarchist communists, are opposed to individuality – far from it – but that in capitalist society individualism is at best an excuse by some to selfishly indulge themselves and at worst an ideology which encourages the most horrendous competitiveness and exploitation. Capitalism loves (and sings the highest praises of) individualism while crushing real individuality. Capitalism fears, however, collective action. A trade union's strength is founded upon the potential of its members to take for collective action. The union's ability to mobilize and control this action is crucial to it's credibility and position as a mediating influence between

worker and boss. If the possibility of collective action is removed, trade unions tend not to be taken seriously by either employers or members any more.

The individual can be compared to the finger of a hand. On it's own it is not particularly strong or effective but in unison with the other fingers it can become a fist. The working class, in whatever context whether community or workplace, is more easily dominated and exploited when it is divided and, because divided, powerless. When it organises itself collectively, it has the potential to act in a concerted manner against capital. The workplace provides opportunities for individual action such as sabotage, absenteeism and 'theft' but these activities, even when organised clandestinely, can be more effective when done collectively. Individual actions may alter relations and conditions within a class but not between classes or permanently. And it is far more likely that the actions of the ruling class in manipulating social relations to its advantage will bring about change far more easily than the efforts of one or more individuals. If not mutuality, what then? As Malatesta says, *My freedom is the freedom of all.*

Collective action also creates a spirit of combativeness as people realize that, far from being powerless, they do have the power to bring about change. The most outstanding example in recent years was the anti-Poll Tax movement. If resistance to that tax had been purely in terms of individual non-payment, of individuals separated from others refusing to pay, rather than in the form of a community of collective struggle, then it would have rapidly collapsed as isolated individuals were picked off by the State.

Mutual Aid

Mutual aid as a basis for human society and all forms of social relationships and organisation is vastly superior as an organizing principle than competition or regulated interaction (contract). Kropotkin showed conclusively that mutual aid was the rule amongst the most successful species (of all kinds, including predatory ones and humankind): "Those species.... which know best how to combine have the greatest chance of survival and of further evolution". Success for the individual is always bought at the expense of the group and is both destructive and energy-consuming. At the same time 'species that live solitarily or in small families are relatively few, and their numbers limited' – and the energy required for them to live at any other than a rudimentary level is great. A simpler life for some means less life for others. The social relation that activates and extends mutuality in time and space is *solidarity.* It is what changes the natural impulse to co-operate and to share into a force governments fear. It is the means by which the potential new social relations acquire the strength to change society and which enable relations and institutions based on mutual aid to retain their strength.

The individual anarchist can only do so much on her/his own. The feeling of isolation which capitalism imposes on the individual rebel can often lead to disillusionment and despair. Collective action in the shape of an anarchist group can accomplish far more whilst a national network constantly keeping militants informed and motivated..... well, who knows what we could achieve? Why not take the *individual* decision to take *collective* action with the Anarchist Federation?

8. DIRECT ACTION

ONE OF THE CENTRAL THEMES OF ANARCHISM is that people should have the freedom and the means to take full control of their lives. Anarchists have developed an individual and collective approach to human emancipation. This has come to be called direct action and takes many forms. Anarchists believe that there is a strong correlation between means and ends and this means freedom is not something that can be granted to us by politicians. We have to act for ourselves if we want a better world.

The belief in self-emancipation arises from a deep distrust of politicians, statesmen, bureaucrats and others who would claim the right and expertise to run society. Anarchists are cynical of such people whether they are on the right or left of the political spectrum. The absurd socialist position which advocates for example, capturing posts within the state system, inevitably ends up with people being at best imprisoned by the system, or more likely with them being transformed by the system itself. Parliament has tamed every fiery MP that has remained for any prolonged period of time within its walls. Direct action essentially means taking control of our own lives and action to create a better world without the mediation of political parties and other organisations that would act on our behalf. As anarchists have pointed out for generations, even the most well-intentioned of leaders and organisations become corrupted by power. The sociologist Robert Michels went so far as to speak of an "iron law of oligarchy" which he argued, overcomes the most democratic of representative organisations. The only realistic way to bring about a better world is to do it ourselves. Anarchists then reject authoritarian, bureaucratic and representative institutions as being opposed to our interests.

Goals

Direct action though, has a more positive character. It enables the oppressed and exploited to gain self-realisation of their value and helps bring about self-empowerment. Setting and achieving goals actually increases the awareness and self-confidence of those in struggle; it is a liberating process in itself. The oppressed, when they engage in struggle, develop and discover qualities that they never dreamed they possessed. And since the struggle is under the control of those directly involved rather than under outside agents, like full time union officials, it also develops skills of organisation and propaganda. A recent clear example of this is to be found in the thousands of local anti-poll tax groups which sprang up around the country in the 1980s. Starting from scratch, ordinary people created effective local direct action groups which dealt a fatal blow to the Poll Tax. Even when struggles end in defeat, they can indicate what methods and tactics should not be used in the future.

However, it is the traditional organisations of the working class which are most likely to fail. For example, the trade unions which are run by tired and cynical hacks invariably hold back and limit the struggle. The characterisation of the National Union of Mineworkers as 'lions led by donkeys" is not far from the truth for that and other trade unions. One of the beauties of doing-it-yourself is that it is an extremely flexible approach which can be used effectively on an individual, group, or mass level. The isolated anarchist, for example, can and should spread the anarchist message, whether by leaflets, stickers, local newssheet, posters etc. It would be wrong, however to fetishise the individual act. On the collective level people can organise much more effectively, having larger resources and numbers to be able to act on a wider scale. Mass strikes, occupations, riots and other militant forms of revolt are dramatic examples of what is possible given the imagination, motivation and militancy of workers in struggle. Less obvious acts include working to rule, go slows, and sabotage.

A form of direct action which has caused some controversy in the ranks of anarchism is "propaganda by the deed", as distinct from (for instance) consciousness-raising or "propaganda by the word". This has involved political assassinations, bombings, etc and was acclaimed by late nineteenth century anarchists, including, for a brief period, Kropotkin. Usually such acts were carried out by individuals or small groups who were isolated from the mass movement. Assassinations of kings and politicians may have been dramatic but were universally counter-productive in that they provided the state with counter-revolutionary propaganda weapon and an excuse for repression. Sometimes, direct action takes forms which herald new revolutionary forms of organisation, embryonic examples of post-revolutionary society within the present one. When workers occupy and control factories, they are demonstrating their claim and power over them. The factory committees which sprang up in Russia in 1917 before the Bolshevik counter revolution showed that workers had the ability and inclination to take over production.

Experiment

In many uprisings, the masses themselves have taken over the task of maintaining order in the face of counter- revolutionary sabotage and terror. In fact the whole process of revolution is like one huge school of self-emancipation and experiment. There have been in the twentieth century dramatic examples of working class, people rejecting their own forms of political organisation in favour of more direct forms of self-organisation, such as political assemblies. The soviets of Russia in 1905 and 1917 and Hungary in 1956 immediately come to mind. However, and this is crucial, action in itself is not enough. There has to be a political awareness and consciousness if self-organisation is not to be subverted by the authoritarians. The soviets in 1917 became intoxicated by the radical sounding propaganda of the Bolsheviks and transformed into willing tools of their enemies, the state socialists. A similar development took place in Germany a year later, though this time it was the right-wing Social Democratic Party that side-tracked the revolution.

Despite these and other difficulties there is still no doubt that only direct action by the oppressed can lead to liberation. Freedom has to be taken - and by us in each and every aspect of our lives.

9. HUMAN NATURE

THE QUESTION OF HUMAN NATURE is a fundamental starting point of any political and social philosophy. The major historic political philosophers such as Hobbes and Rousseau had very definite views on the subject, that shaped the nature of their proposed ideal societies. Generally speaking, political standpoints which have a 'pessimistic' view of human nature are on the right of capitalism. 'Pessimism' in this context means that human beings (or at least the masses) are seen as morally weak, corruptible, greedy and in need of leaders. Societies based on this view must be organised on a hierarchical basis, with the weak masses being controlled by an enlightened or otherwise superior elite or ruling class. Fascism and conservatism share the view that leadership, a strong state to enforce that leadership and economic inequalities are natural, even necessary, being merely a reflection of the reality of human nature.

Propaganda

It has to be admitted that, in society on these islands and indeed in many others, many working people accept this pessimistic viewpoint. Decades of propaganda from schools and the media have been swallowed whole and an acceptance of inequalities and the impossibility of an egalitarian society are generally accepted. Human nature, we are assured, makes a just and equal society an impossible utopian dream. Anarchist communism as a political doctrine involves an 'optimistic' view of human nature, whilst taking a very critical (some would say cynical) view of the realities of present-day social and political organisations within the capitalist system. We obviously reject the pessimism of the Right, which we are convinced is nothing more than a crude justification for exploiting most of humankind. How can such an optimistic view of human nature be justified on the part of anarchist communists?

Firstly we look to anthropology to show that human societies have been and are often organised on communistic lines. Harold Barclay's *People Without Government* and Pierre Clastre's *Society Against The State* contain numerous examples of people living without classes or the State perfectly happily. Archaeology tells us that that the State and economic classes emerged in a number of places (Mesopotamia, Egypt etc) only about 5000 years ago (compared with 100,000 of human pre-history before then) – the rest of the world coped without the State for a lot longer than it has been around. The reasons why the State and classes did emerge are controversial issues but the truth is that humans lived in classless societies for tens of thousands of years. If human nature was always selfish, greedy, individualistic and mean (as so many right-wing philosophers with a vested interest tell us), such societies could never have existed, never mind surviving for millennia.

Impossible?

Our critics say it is impossible to 'prove' the anarchist communist case that people are basically co-operative and social in their approach to life. After all, there are daily examples of individuals acting in uncaring and selfish ways. Our reply to this is that the development of hierarchy, social classes, the State and capitalism have all taken their toll and have distorted our fundamental human natures. Human beings, unlike all other living creatures, have the capacity to act consciously against their natures and are highly flexible in their response to 'abnormal' social conditions which typify everyday life. What is remarkable is that given the fundamentally anti-human nature of capitalism, so many people still retain any sense of co-operativeness, solidarity and a caring approach to life. People need security in their everyday lives within the context of community solidarity and cohesion. In pre-war Germany, conditions were so bad that millions of people voted for the illusory sense of security that Fascism offered (and joined the Nazi Party out of a desire to be safe, to belong to something), rather than the chaotic bourgeois democracy of the Weimar Republic. For an interesting discussion of this, read Erich Fromm's *Fear of Freedom.* Today, the desperate need for security and community induces people to join all sorts of religious cults, to merge themselves wholly in the dance scene, to seek communal expression for their fears, whether paedophile witch-hunters or Muslim youth gangs. The rise of alternative religions in the West and other phenomena is directly attributable to the anti-human nature of capitalism.

Along with the basic needs of community and security (both economic and psychological), humans must have a significant degree of personal autonomy or, if you like, freedom, if they are to develop according to their natures. Capitalist societies offer the illusion of freedom (to consume) whilst enslaving millions in factories, shops, offices and the home. The political and legal systems fix the limits of freedom ever more narrowly, distorting and deforming in all sorts of ways the daily lives of working people. Exploitation and domination by capitalism has created an army of confused and lost people, unable to relate with others on a meaningful level or only within the culture and language of their 'tribe'.

Conformity

Children are moulded to conform to a sexual division of expression and behaviour, which prepares them for a later division of labour on gender lines. Boys are cajoled into playing active, aggressive and masculine roles. Their natural responses must be suppressed - "big boys don't cry" – and they are conditioned to deny themselves. Girls are brought up to be passive and dependent, with the ultimate aim of motherhood as the way to achieve completeness as a person. Even roles such as 'New Man' and 'lad-ette' are manufactured to create the illusion of freedom but instead create only a compulsion to behave (to consume) in a particular way. Socialisation of this sort begins at birth and carries on relentlessly throughout childhood and pre-adult life. Even supposedly fundamental concepts such as 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are not natural, but are taught and must be learned through a long and often painful process. No wonder so many people are fucked up, given that the process is imposed on all, regardless of who they actually are.

Only anarchism, and particularly anarchist communism, allows the full development of human beings which is as much dependent on interactions of all kinds with other humans as it does on the individual will we ourselves may exercise. It alone bases its approach on the proven need of humans for both collective security through community (on the one hand) and personal autonomy (on the other) via solidarity and sociability. Place these within the context of a non-exploitative and classless society, the necessary *pre-condition* for protecting and nurturing human nature, and you have anarchist communism. Though human nature is necessarily very complex, only in an anarchist communist society of the future (but which is being built today) can human nature be given its full expression and revealed in all its fullness. Creativity, love, belonging and freedom are mutilated in today's society; packaged and sold where a profit can be made, damaged and destroyed where they can't. In the society of the future, these qualities of essential human nature will be set free.

10. AGAINST EXPLOITATION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASS SOCIETIES, which in ancient times replaced egalitarian societies throughout the world, were disastrous for the great mass of humanity. Although there were often gains, in terms of increased productivity through improved communications etc, society became divided into haves and have-nots. Class societies are based on exploitation – the process by which the many provide for the greater well-being of the few. The 'invention' of private property and the explosion of capitalism as the dominant economic system in the last few hundred years brought the process of exploitation to near perfection. Exploitation under capitalism primarily means that workers are robbed by their employers of the full value of their labour. If the boss wants profit, and money to package, advertise and develop the product, he can only get it by stealing a greater and greater share of its market value from the person who produced it. There is an irony here since, of course, the bosses hate pilfering by workers. Grand larceny by one is okay, it seems, petty theft by the other is not. Only a portion of the wealth that workers create actually goes to them and sometimes a very small proportion indeed! The rest goes to the capitalist as profit, leading over time and depending on the level of exploitation, to the creation of huge personal and corporate wealth. Even quite small employers frequently leave millions in their wills.

Marx

Karl Marx, despite anarchist criticism of his failure to analyse the dangers of state power, powerfully explained some of the ways exploitation occurs. Wealth, he pointed out, comes about when the raw materials provided by nature (wood, cotton coal and so on) are transformed by labour using technology (tools, scientific processes, machinery etc). Before capitalism, the production of goods was a series of transactions between independent producers. The woodsman sold timber, the carpenter

shaped it, the merchant transported it, the retailer sold it. Each sold what he or she owned for what it was worth to them or what the market offered, freely and by their own decision. Wealth stolen and accumulated during centuries of feudalism (dependent on the exploitation of bonded labourers), allowed proto-capitalists to take control of these transactions away from the people themselves, turning them into waged labourers entirely dependent on the owner. The forests were enclosed and became the property of the nobles, who sold rights to their timber to the new merchants and industrialists. Carpenters could only get wood if they agreed to sell the finished articles to the industrialist who then controlled the price to the retailer. As more and more parts of the process fell into the hands of a single person, the capitalist, more and more of the profit available at each stage of transaction began to be accumulated in a single place, giving the owners even more power, for they could now demand lower prices for commodities and higher prices for finished goods, buying the parts of government they needed – the army, local militias, magistrates, law-makers and so on – to protect their wealth and accelerate the process.

Of course, what is supposed to regulate this process is the market and, in the 20th Century, the interventions of social democratic governments. In good times, when the market is booming and prices high, the owning classes make great profit. Presumably these entrepreneurs, the great risk-takers who build political and commercial empires, take a loss when economies contract and prices fall? Not a bit of it! Because they own everything, and are protected by government, they find it easier to reduce their costs by laying-off their workforce, sacking people. The workers become an economic liability in times of recession and the labour power of the worker, the power that creates all wealth, merely one more commodity that can only be sold for what the market for labour, again controlled by the owning classes, is prepared to pay.

So the workers are robbed day in and day out. What they own is bought for less than it is worth. What they produce is taken from them for less than they could sell it for. What they must buy to live is sold to them at more than it cost to produce. Unfortunately, most workers ie us, are unaware of this. Many workers accept the principle of 'a fair day's work, for a fair day's pay', little realizing that the 'game' is unfair from the start. Because most of us contribute only a small part to the finished article, this exploitation is largely invisible. We think managers simply manage, control a process of production, are just like us, when in fact they are scheming day in and day out to increase productivity or push down costs – to make profit. A bad boss will make us angry and sometimes create a sense of injustice, for instance when even profitable factories are closed, but rarely do we feel consciously exploited.

Exploiting Ourselves

The workers, by and large, accept the capitalist economic approach of seeing themselves as one of the costs of production, rather than the main source of society's wealth. In doing so, they unwittingly accept the basic premise of the capitalist system. There are many reasons why workers unthinkingly accept their exploitation. In part it is due to the persuasive power of education and the mass media but also it is a result of trade unionism.

Trade unions accept capitalism. Their role is not to help bring about its destruction but to operate within it. In doing so they help promote capitalist exploitation. The unions try to improve wages and conditions but to do so they must accept the bosses' right to manage and to go on exploiting people. If workers, through their trade unions, ever manage to reclaim too high a proportion of the wealth they create, the bosses simply close the factory as 'unprofitable'. The process of collective bargaining between workers and management is a recognition of the legitimacy of the system. In other words, the best that unions can offer is a 'fairer' (!) system of exploitation.

By dividing workers on the basis of what they do, by skill, industry and class, trade unions also aid the process of exploitation by dividing workers one from another. A divided working class is a weakened one. Where employers feel they have extra scope to extend the level of exploitation, they will do so. For example, young workers, women and recent immigrants are easily exploited due to a whole range of cultural factors that make them vulnerable, and suffer as a result. Despite so-called protective legislation, the rise of feminism and 'girl power', women still earn a lot less than men, even when the work is of a similar nature.

Unlike many Marxists who view the process of exploitation in supposedly 'scientific' terms, anarchist communists have no truck with such 'objectivity'. Capitalism is a system which is morally unjust, corrupting, degrading and highly destructive of environments, people and societies. The wages system, which is the basic mechanism of exploitation, must be swept away as part of the movement to destroy capitalism. As Kropotkin pointed out, all of the wealth of the world which has been produced over the centuries is the result of the efforts of all humanity. This wealth must be restored to all of the people of the world – it belongs to no-one and everyone.

11. WORK

It has become an article of the creed of modern morality that all labour is good in itself- a convenient belief to those who live on the wealth of others William Morris, *Useful Work vs Useless Toil* 1885

LET'S FACE IT, work as we know and loathe it today, sucks. Anybody who has worked for a wage or a salary will confirm that. Work, for the vast majority of us, is basically forced labour. And it feels like it too! Whether you're working on a casual or temporary basis and suffer all the insecurities that entails or are 'lucky' enough to have a permanent position where the job security tightens like a noose around your neck, it's pretty much the same. Work offers it all: physical and nervous exhaustion, illness and, more often than not, mind-numbing boredom. Not to mention the feeling of being shafted for the benefit of

someone else's profit. Think about it. Work eats up our lives. Not just the time we're physically engaged in it either. Apart from the hours we're paid for, work dominates every facet of our existence. When we're not at the job we're traveling to or from it, preparing or recovering from it, trying to forget about it or attempting to escape from it in what is laughably called our 'leisure' time.

Indeed work, a truly offensive four-letter word, is almost too horrifying to contemplate. The fact is that those of us 'in work' sacrifice the best part of our waking lives to work in order to survive in order to work..... This scary aspect of reality is so frightening that work itself becomes a kind of drug, numbing us, clouding our minds, with the wage packet the ultimate reward. Think about it too much and even the 'cushiest' of jobs becomes pretty unbearable. Apart from the basic fact that if you don't work (sell your labour power) and would rather not accept the pittance of state benefits you don't eat, wage slaves are dragooned into 'gainful employment' by ideologies designed to persuade of the personal and social necessity of 'having a job'. This can be described as the 'Ideology of Work'. What we need to ask is, where did these ideologies come from and how did they manage to get such a hold on us?

Slaves of Many Kinds

Ancient Greek civilization, that model for modern democracies, did not consider physical labour to have any intrinsic value other than it's immediate benefit to the individual and community. That an ideology of work did not develop in Greek society was due to the simple fact that most labour was provided by a captive population, its slaves, conscripted and coerced at will. The abject powerlessness and dependence of the slaves upon their masters meant that there was minimal need to convince them of their toil's worth or value. This was also true of the many forms of bonded servitude that existed throughout the ancient world. We have little record of what the slaves themselves thought about the work they were compelled to do, although the slave-gladiator Spartacus would later give Roman slaveholders something to think about!

An identifiable ideology of work began to take shape with the decline of slavery and the emergence of feudalism. The Catholic Church has, throughout its history, been uniquely part of the political apparatus of the ruling class and has always served its interests. The many medieval peasant uprisings and heretical movements based on the poverty of Christ threatened both State and Church alike, proclaiming an earthly heaven where the power of the nobles to enforce work through taxation would be ended by sharing out the wealth of both amongst the poor. Additionally, people began to control their working lives more, demanding higher wages and organizing in independent craft guilds. In response, the idea of work as a spiritual and noble activity began to be preached from the pulpits, divinely ordained. Those who worked began to be accorded a new status within the overall divine hierarchy with nobles and priests at the top, sturdy yeomen in the middle and humble villein below. Those free spirits or broken men who resisted domestication, 'sturdy beggars' and 'scroungers' were vilified by the ruling classes who passed draconian laws against so-called vagrancy and vagabondage. Individuals who had not been integrated into the economy were portrayed as lazy and ungodly outlaws and forced into what would eventually become the embryonic working class.

Calvinist theology maintains that only a pre-selected few, the Elect, will see heaven. The proof of one's saintly nature and assured heavenly reward was believed to be earthly success so Calvinism developed a strong work ethic. Calvinists dedicated themselves to working hard and accumulating wealth, mute witness to their divine manifest destiny. This single-minded, methodical and disciplined ideology was highly useful to the emerging capitalist classes who were, in many countries, the religious classes as well. It also provided a theory of society that ensured the successful transformation of medieval society's bonded labourers (serfs) into (theoretically) free men – the wage slaves of the future who have to sell their labour – without too much risk that they might turn their backs on the whole sordid mess. As a result capitalism fundamentally changed the nature of work.

The protestant work ethic, as it came to be known, was reinforced as industrial capitalism consolidated it's grip on society (though not without considerable and violent working class resistance). It's virtually impossible now to realize that virtually everything produced by society (except those requiring collective effort like mining, brewing or baking) was owned by those who produced it, who were able to control the value of their labour through the price they were prepared to sell it for. The 'success' of the factory system meant that capitalism had a means to create vast numbers of jobs but at the price of surrendering this power and wit it, freedom itself. But for decades it could never meet its need for labour, hence the wholesale enslavement, sorry recruitment, of tens of thousands of women and children into factory and mine. New laws were passed which restricted the ability of people to work on a temporary or casual basis. Existence itself (without means of visible support) became a crime as the industrial masters sought to discipline an essentially free peasantry and artisan class into docile factory armies. To the stick of social stigma, the workhouse and prison for those who refused to work, the bosses added the carrot of permanent employment for the loyal and humble worker, wage differentials for skilled and semi-skilled labour, a mythic social prestige for the 'kings of labour' (miners, steelworkers and the like). A 'job for life' became a commonly-held and achieved aim maintained in periods of healthy capitalism but withheld when recession or the need to restructure capitalism arrived. In even recent times, children were able to leave school at fourteen and be with the same employer, often doing the same job until retirement. The work ethic was reinforced by encouraging workers' self-identification with their work. Even today, the first question following an introduction remains "What do you do?" Miner's villages, working men's clubs, factory leagues, trades unions, the occupational pension – aspects of society that divided workers one from another as much as they defined them. This job identification was reinforced by craft, and later trade, unionism which encouraged skilled workers to regard themselves as a special case and to practice mutual aid and solidarity only within their own trade or even grade of work within the trade.

The Ideology of Work

All of this was happening as wage labour was becoming generalized and assisted in its legitimization in the eyes of the new working class and in society as a whole. Unemployment became a moral not social problem, whilst those without work became 'victims', 'unfortunates' by progressives and pariahs by everyone else. This ideology dominated despite the efforts of socialists to get across the basic fact of life that unemployment was created by capitalism, and no-one else. Large numbers of people continue to blame themselves for their unemployed state, for their poverty and lack of any human worth, an attitude the state sees no reason to change. It keeps people from demanding work when none is available but does not prevent them being coerced back into the labour force when they are once again needed.

This ideology of work has begun to be challenged by recent changes in capitalism itself, by chronic mass unemployment and under-employment, the phenomenon of temporary and casual work, short-term contracts and flexibility. The notion of a job for life, so widespread in the boom period of post-war capitalism, has become a thing of the past for most working people outside the so-called professions. The apprenticeships which created skilled manual workers for manufacturing industries are almost non-existent. Work is transitory, fragmented and periods of unemployment regarded as a natural condition. Many young working class people have never experienced the 'dignity' which labour is supposed to bestow and those who have never known the 'world of work' feel little guilt in not being part of it. At the same time it is obvious that work as a basis for capitalism's desired smooth social integration of the working class is being undermined both by chronic global economic crises, which is requiring rapid and radical restructuring, and by new technologies which are increasingly making certain classes of workers redundant.

So where does this leave libertarian revolutionaries and our vision of social change ? Will our arguments for a society without 'employment' ie without bosses and wage labour, make more sense to working class people for whom work has already become a despicable means to an end, and for whom work has little meaning. Is there the possibility that a weakening of workers' identification with their 'occupation' will engender a weakening of their identification with the status quo? Or perhaps the atomization of large sections of the working class by the continuing process of capitalism's development bring a further dissipation of class consciousness?

Whatever the consequences of the decline of the work ethic and ideology, one thing is for certain and that is that wage labour will remain an alienated and alienating experience for those who are forced to take part in it at whatever level, and that the exploitation inherent in work under capitalism will not go away. The emancipation from work is the task of the workers alone!

12. LEADERS

MOST PEOPLE on the left would argue that 'democracy' is infinitely preferable to fascism and many working class people dies in what they saw as a fight against the tyranny of fascism. However, this supposed alternative also takes away our liberty in perhaps a more insidious manner because of the smoke-screen it hides behind. One of the main distinctions between the two is the use of naked force by fascism as opposed to the subtle brainwashing used in a democracy. One method is blatant and crude, the other is subtle and sophisticated but achieving the same goal: our passive acceptance of a system that oppresses us. A major plank of this menacing strategy is the cult of leadership, a cult that is incompatible with the establishment of a society based on freedom and equality.

In any society there is a wide range of abilities, with most people falling somewhere in the middle. The collective intelligence, knowledge and experience of the many far outweighs the contribution of the few so-called 'geniuses'. Despite this, human history has been marked by the usurpation of struggle and movements for social change by leaders who claim to know best. The struggle of men and women for freedom from the political, economic and spiritual shackles that bind them has always been long and painful. But time and again, having rid themselves of one tyranny, people have allowed another to replace it. Afraid to use their new found freedom, they hold up their wrists up to some new jailer. If a truly free society is to be achieved, which can only be an anarchist communist society, we must do more than get rid of the obvious sources of oppression. The working class must also transform itself as individuals so as to reject leaders, and any new tyranny.

It is not surprising that people are so willing to submit to leaders. Capitalist society is organised so as to bleed us of our ability to think for ourselves and take control of our own lives. This learned passivity manifests itself on the most subtle psychological levels. Individuals are taught from an early age that the best way they can fulfill the human urge to sociability, to belong, is to obey, to accept authority and the hierarchy of leader and follower. There are many examples of such hierarchies and the sub-cultures that support them, from political parties to skinhead gangs. There is a dress and hair code (think New Labour drones!) that identifies people as members of the group. To become a member, individuals signal their acceptance of its culture (and its hierarchy) by changing their clothes, their look, their views, to conform. If the individual questions group behaviour, or challenges the formal or informal leadership structures, then she/he is rejected and loses group membership, a traumatic experience for many. Even groups supposedly challenging capitalism, such as the old-style communist and trotskyist parties, incorporate and crystallize its values, and the hierarchies and division of labour into (for instance) 'leaders' and the 'rank-and-file'. The subversion of the urge to sociability and the search (in a troubled world) for security has produced a cult of leadership. Schools and youth movements are urged to train children to become "the leaders of tomorrow". Job references must emphasise the applicant's "leadership qualities". Workers must elect leaders who will negotiate with the boss. Political parties of left and right choose a leader and then ask voters to choose between them, with the winner making decisions for the entire population. The cult of leadership pervades the whole of society.

Initiative

Before we examine what is involved in this general acceptance of leaders, we want to differentiate it from something often confused with leadership: individual initiative. This fundamental impulse to originate and construct, to create something helpful to others and which wins their approval is common to all humanity. It is a self-expressive impulse that has nothing to do with the will to power of the few. The realization of the self, the expression of our uniqueness, is one of the most powerful of human aspirations and a basic building block of a free society and must be preserved at all costs in modern society. However, as anarchist communists, we profoundly believe that the individual can only realize her/himself in a social context, within the community and not in spite of it. We are asked to admire the rags-to-riches story of those who have rejected their origins for a life of wealth and privilege but rarely learn the human cost of success, both to the individual and those they have harmed along the way. We marvel at the fact that such people have become 'monsters', seemingly supra-human figures, without realizing that, having abandoned community, their individuality is all that defines them any more. In contrast, if we are able to express ourselves within the context of the many different groups and communities that we belong to, our individuality is enhanced and not, as is so often said, submerged.

We are also told we need leaders because without obedience there would be chaos. It is assumed that without anyone telling us what to do, we would not know what to do and nothing would get done. Nor would we know how to behave. As anarchists we know that human beings are naturally co-operative, problem-solving animals who could manage perfectly well without leaders, and that it is capitalist society that fosters aggression and selfish competition. t is rare indeed for leaders to actually have the answers that solve the social and personal problems confronting us. This need to overcome such problems leads us to charismatic conmen and women who we allow to offer leadership. What they offer is a sham, a demagogic ritual that actually persuades us that the work, the effort and sacrifice demanded to solve the problem we are confronting is worth it, to please the leader. Many supposedly progressive groups, including parties of the left, proclaim the simple need for *better* leaders. The workers, they say, or the people, have been let down by bad leaders. In other words, they want *themselves* to replace the 'bad' leaders currently in power. This is just another sham, a dangerous diversion for what we need is *no* leaders, not *better* ones.

Unnatural Societies

The social hierarchy that we accept as a natural order is just as unnatural and illogical as government itself. There are no 'natural' leaders, only a ruling class which has grabbed power and uses this power to exploit and dominate the mass of humanity. Social classes are not ordained by nature but the historical product of an exploitative society. Unfortunately the acceptance of hierarchy has filtered down to all levels of society and even exists in the organisations workers create it challenge the system.

Collective responsibility is the alternative to leadership and the counterpart to equality. If we are to succeed in building an anarchist communist society, then the working class must learn to rely on itself. And each individual in that class must be prepared to take responsibility and participate in the transformation of society. The revolution must not only be against the ruling class but against leaders and hierarchy at all levels of society. And, most importantly, it must be a revolution against our own passivity.

13. PATRIARCHY

A BIG WORD used by many to describe societies that are ruled by men. Originally it was used to refer to more 'primitive', older cultures, comparing them with the matriarchal (ruled by women) societies that had apparently come before. The term became popular in the late '60s and '70s with the growth of the women's movement. Instead of talking about capitalist society, which was a sex-neutral term implying the rule of capital, feminists were keen to use a word highlighting the dominant role men played in society. Bosses, military leaders, politicians, rapists, wife beaters, etc, are, for the most part, men. Even working class men rule in their own home and upper class women are dependent and subservient to their dominant husbands and fathers. By using the term patriarchy, feminists hoped to challenge the assumption made by revolutionaries of various tendencies: that ending capitalism would automatically end women's oppression.

Patriarchy could be used to describe a whole social system. In the'70s and 80s, debates raged as to whether such a social system existed. Traditional leftists in the Marxist organisations denounced the use of the term because it implied that men's oppression of women was more fundamental than the bosses' exploitation of the working class. Women activists accused the political organisations of putting all oppression down to class exploitation, so ignoring the existence of men's role in society as oppressors. Others tried to bridge the gap by using the term patriarchal capitalism, arguing that both sexual oppression and class exploitation were important: "By patriarchy we mean a system in which all women are oppressed, an oppression which is total, affecting all aspects of our lives. Just as class oppression preceded capitalism, so does our oppression. We do not acknowledge that men are oppressed as a sex although working class men, gay men and black men are oppressed as workers, gays and blacks, an oppression shared by gay, black and working class women." (*Editorial statement: Scarlet Women 8, newsletter of the Socialist Feminist Current)*

A Side Issue?

In the end nothing was resolved. In the Leninist organisations, the 'class side' won and women's oppression was once again relegated to a side issue. Many women retreated angrily into separatism, reinforcing the view that men are the key enemy. So

where do anarchist communists stand in all this? Anarchist communists reject the view that women's oppression will end with the overthrow of the bosses and recognise it cannot be explained simply in terms of an economic system. A more complex framework of analysis is needed, recognising the role of ideology and the role of men in keeping women down. For this the concept of patriarchy is useful, though a rather abstract term. This does not mean that male domination is natural or unchangeable. It is not men as such who are the enemy, but the roles of masculinity that they are playing and the power they have. At the same time women's oppression cannot be understood solely in terms of patriarchy as this fails to address the way capitalism has influenced women's oppression, creating different circumstances for women in different classes as well as giving then differing amounts of power. In the same way that we cannot gloss over difference between men and women within the working class, we cannot gloss over differences between women. Nevertheless, the concept of patriarchy highlights the fact that women are oppressed and that they are not just oppressed by capital but by men, who have an interest in maintaining this situation.

In some cases it is obvious to see how men benefit from sexism: men's superior place in the labour market, and the emotional and material benefits they gain from the family. However, men benefit in less obvious ways, as in sexuality, with women bearing the burden of contraception. Anarchist communism is about transforming all areas of life - not just material circumstances. It follows that we need to challenge the whole culture which will involve revolutionising the relations between men and women, liberating both sexes from the traditional role that we have been brainwashed to play.

This struggle must be part of the general revolutionary movement to over throw capitalism. Capitalism uses the gender differences to its own advantage – the 'macho man' for war and business and the feminine woman' for caring, supporting and picking up the pieces. The revolution must be one that ends all power, whether it is that of capital, the State or male. On its own, the concept of patriarchy is inadequate for understanding women's oppression. However used in conjunction with a general class analysis it plays an essential part in our understanding of society.

14. OPPOSITION TO RACISM

ALTHOUGH ANARCHISM AS an idea is compledy incompatible with any with any form of racism, the Anarchist movement has not been free of the racism inherent in the societies from which it has come, the most infamous being Bakunin's pan-slavism and anti-German views.

More than this, anarchism is largely the product of white Europeans who, however committed to the concept of a global emancipation of all oppressed people, were and are limited by their own cultural background, and one of the consequences of this is that the movement has concentrated on class and the state as the prime factors in achieving freedom and equality while other forms of exploitation such as race, but also gender, sexual orientation, disability, age etc are regarded as side issues which will either magically disappear on the abolition of capitalism or are subsumed as just another facet of the class struggle. Many, if not most, anarchists are conscious of these failings in our movement and while a full social revolution can only come from the combined struggle and theory of all the oppressed, with the aim of furthering our own understanding, here are some notes from the anarchist movement of today on why we oppose racism, what our analysis of racism is and how we can best fight it.

The idea that people should be treated differently because of physical or genetic differences is so ethically revolting and frankly ludicrous that you might well think it is a waste of time to refute such blind prejudices with cogent arguments. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and to clear up a few difficulties, here are some key points. Anarchist communism is a society of all rational beings, the fact there are no substantial differences between so-called racial groups is a diversion, it would not matter to anarchists if there were and the whole debate on racial science, though doubtless interesting in terms of human biology, is politically useless as an argument for or against racism. The simplistic, anti-racist views of those in power obscure the real reasons for opposing racism. If Jesse Owens had won nothing at the Berlin Olympics he would still have been as entitled to equal treatment with white people and Hitler's National Socialism would still have been as evil and repugnant a doctrine. The problem with racists is not that they have small brains, as in a famous advertising campaign, but that they have wrong ideas. A second point is that cultural differences do not imply political differences. Anarchism recognises cultural differences between groups of people as well as between individuals. If my neighbour likes pop music and I like classical it should have no bearing if we meet together as part of our local community to, say, decide on installing central heating in our block of flats. In a future anarchist society, groups the world over will have to co-operate on practical issues all the time, this will give them an opportunity to share their cultural backgrounds but not for one to impose it on another. The problem is not of differing cultures but of differing power.

Finally on this subject, anarchism is distinguished from liberal anti-racism in economics. We do not advocate individual or national inheritance of money or any form of property. There has been much argument over the issue of compensating disadvantaged racial or national groups for exploitation of their ancestors, for example affirmative action on employment in America or compensation to African countries for the effects of the slave trade. The anarchist response is to demand an immediate redistribution of goods and services worldwide on the basis of need enacted by a global revolution, but this is not the same as giving people what they have a right to or giving back what they have been robbed or cheated of. Even if it were possible to assess correctly all the injustices of the past, an incomprehensibly difficult task, we can do nothing to compensate the dead. More fundamentally we regard the world's wealth as an accumulation of the work and ideas of the whole human race throughout history and as such it should be equally available to all according to their needs. As an example, you could not read this article if paper had not been invented, but no-one can identify all the thousands involved in that process nor should

that give, if it were possible, their descendants an exclusive right to the use of paper, because it is the common inheritance of humanity. The mistake of undoing the evils of the past is in perpetuating its divisions while in reality only a few in privileged elites benefit.

The problem for anarchism is how opposing racism fits in with righting all oppression and exploitation. Anarchism has traditionally seen class as the key merit of analysis, not only because it the key division in the establishment of capitalism in Europe but also because unlike racial or gender divisions, it is a totally social construct so that people can not only change class but that class itself can be abolished, whereas with race only the exploitative nature, not the concept itself, was to be changed. Equality between races or any other physical distinction would therefore logically come with the abolition of class. But this was not seen as being true the other way round, so that there could be a society in which there is no discrimination on grounds of race, which is still hierarchical and exploitative. While there is much truth in this, it is a fact that the vast majority of struggle initiated in favour of the working class, e.g. social democracy (for example, the Labour Party) and Marxist-Leninism, have proved capable of taking power on behalf of the working class without showing any sign of abolishing inequality. Without conscious effort to that end, it does not follow that an anarchist revolution would eliminate existing prejudices. While the traditional anarchist emphasis on small-scale community decision-making would have a very real danger of leaving global differences in wealth unchanged from that of capitalism.

The struggle against racism does not preclude a simultaneous equality in all other forms of social relations; in fact it logically requires it. Overcoming racism is not a separate issue or a first step in achieving an Anarchist communist society, but an integral part of the process. How large a part depends on how much states and bosses exploit people on racial lines and how well we stop them subverting the struggle with liberal myths of 'equality before the law' and token 'success' stories of individuals making good under capitalism. As with any form of oppression people of colour can only be secure in their freedom if everyone else is. This is where the struggle against racism may provide a keystone of libertarian theory, for racism is little more than the inverse side of social solidarity. Identifying this natural sense of solidarity with exclusion of others gives racism its strength, but in fighting it we can acquire the tools of a co-operative social interaction.

As materialists we believe that the struggle for freedom comes out of the real experience of people fighting their oppressors and developing an alternative society from the process of doing so. This means that the prime move must come from each oppressed group itself. For racism in Britain this involves the non-white population organising according to their own understanding and experience, but with the support of those who are oppressed in other ways. This is not simply a union of different groups working together to make themselves more effective, but a recognition that individuals face many forms of oppression simultaneously and just as each of these can only be fought by joining together with others who suffer in the same way, the whole edifice of tyranny can only be overcome by joining together all oppressed groups. No basis of struggle is intrinsically more important than another in achieving this, the important thing is to form from them a unity of theory and practice. Just to finish, this piece has been long on theory and lacking in practical ideas as to combating racism in everyday life, which is just as important to the anarchist position, and we hope to deal with this in detail soon. In the meantime, if this article is too heavy, feel free to bop some white supremacist on the head with it.

15. MILITARISM

OF ALL THE 'ISMS', militarism is the most poisonous, destructive and dangerous. When active it destroys people, cultures and rational thought. When relatively passive (though it is never truly passive), it enters the minds and value systems of society in a way that reinforces conformity and obedience.

Military values require uniformity, not only of appearance but also of attitude and values. The armed forces expend considerable effort in ensuring that soldiers at al levels accept without question the inherent and unquestionable superiority of their methods, aims and ideology. In the heat of battle there is no scope for questioning the validity of the campaign or particular action. Robot-like acceptance is paramount. Militarism, the glorification of military values and methods, has a long history. In Europe, Asia and South America that undoubted symbol of militarism, the military uniform and with it social prestige, has existed for thousands of years, as witness Assyrian carved reliefs looted from Iraq but now in the British Museum showing the disciplined ranks of the king's army; these are well over 2,500 years old. Military values also accept without question the validity of hierarchy. Orders start at the top and are passed down to the ranks. Whilst there is scope for individual decision-making – no large organisation can cope without some imaginations and initiative – this is only permitted within a strict and rigid chain of command. Despite skepticism within the ranks, orders are there to be obeyed. Obedience is an essential feature of the military approach and, in wartime, failure to obey can lead to severe punishments.

Militarism and Society

A further feature of the military approach is discipline. The soldier, sailor or air force person must act as part of a team, exercising self-discipline in all circumstances. And this self-discipline must be an extension and internalization of the wider military discipline. Discipline, hierarchy and obedience combine to realize most effectively the ultimate aim of military values, the activation of violence. Since the days of the spear and the bow, military technology has pursued a single goal, the most effective destruction of the enemy with the minimum loss to one's own side. Capitalism's vast investment in, and profits from such technology has given the armed forces of the world's most powerful nations a killing capacity that now makes the mass destructions of Dresden or Hiroshima look like tea parties.

Militarism is the application of military methods and values to the wider society. This is done most effectively when it accompanies some other so-called truth such as religion, racial purity, imperialism and nationalism. In its most effective expressions – Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia – all opposition was either eliminated or cowed and the whole society subjected to military methods and organisation, leading ultimately to war. Whether racial nationalism in Germany or 'socialism in on country' in Russia (leading to the Great Patriotic War of 1941-5), the identification of nation with the army was a powerful concoction. More recently there have been pale imitations such as Saddam Hussein's long war against Iran or the racial-religious-nationalist ideology that fuelled the Rwandan genocide, with the virtual destruction of civil society in all its senses. The re-emergence of religious fundamentalism as a significant force, combined with nationalism and militarism, is brewing a truly powerful cocktail of destruction. Last seen in pre-war Japan, it is on the rise both in the Islamic states along Russia's borders and in America itself. Imagine a christian-imperialist-militarist USA saving the world through war with the godless hordes beyond its borders.

Militaristic, Us?

Militarism is not restricted to dictatorships. It insidiously permeates many corners of life in supposedly peace-loving and democratic societies. Young boys in particular are subtly and not so subtly inculcated into militaristic behaviour and thought. The scouts and the various military cadet forces all pretend to offer individual growth and adventure but actually promote military ideas and values. Should anyone remain skeptical, compare the uniforms, organisation and activities of the scouts with those of the Hitler Youth; the similarities are remarkable. Such militaristic youth organisations are symptomatic of an underlying tendency towards militarism in capitalist society. Violent computer games and videos are the scandal of polite society while teenagers fingering sub-machine guns or clambering over tanks whenever the army comes to town to recruit is widely seen as okay.

The British military presence in Northern Ireland has further deepened and extended public acceptance of militarism. The fact that the British armed forces have systematically used repressive violence to maintain capitalist order has raised barely a murmur on the mainland and is largely unseen outside the Six Counties. Compare this to the outcry whenever a British soldier is killed or injured or imprisoned for gunning down an unarmed civilian. The British soldier has been raised upon a pedestal and even when convicted or murdering a civilian is considered to be innocent by the Establishment and mass media.

The annual poppy day rituals at war memorials throughout Britain remind the populace of the importance of the armed forces to our culture. Pretending to honour those who were killed or wounded in war (while insulting the widows and handicapped with poverty level pensions), they only serve to glorify it. These ceremonies make the entire machinery of war sacred, giving it a religious-patriotic-spiritual quality. Though fought on behalf of the ruling classes, wars are legitimized and placed beyond criticism. Spectacles such as these keep the public interested in things military at a fairly constant level, ready to be mobilized in time of the ruling class's need to go to war. They, and the accompanying propaganda, are part of a mythologizing process that legitimizes all past British military actions. And, by extension, serve to legitimize all future conflicts.

Militarism, whilst low-key in the so-called liberal democracies, has been given a new dimension and magical quality by advanced technology. There are no limits on what technology and science are supposed to be able to do and it is brought into our lives by combat magazines and cameras in 'smart' missiles. We are not told, until after, just how badly supposedly advanced military technology performs or its effectiveness at killing 'our' troops, friendly forces or civilians. Death by friendly fire is a price the winning side is well prepared to pay and nothing compared to what the enemy will do unless stopped! The constant refrain of superior military technology is meant to convince the home front of its moral superiority and to justify investment into new weapons to maintain that superiority in future wars.

The Cult of Arms

Because weapons must be sold to armies and their use sold to the people who must fight and pay, they are often publicized in startling ways. Fascination with military technology has been harnessed to give the state's murder machines a sexy quality: look at that fighter bomber, admire it's power, it's smooth lines, it's performance. Combat chic, surgical strikes. The arrogance felt by the military elites is shared by the ordinary soldier in militarized armies (as opposed to, for instance, conscript armies, militias or guerilla forces), based on a cult of masculinity which reaches poisonous heights in the armed forces. The parody of what men should be like is given its full expression through the cult of heavy drinking, brutality, hardness and segregation from women. This leads in turn to a casual brutality in occupied countries (and to those towns in Britain occupied by army barracks), for instance the Paras in Ireland and the Falklands, US Marines in Okinawa, Dutch troops in Bosnia and Canadian soldiers in Somalia. Mass rapes of German women by Russian soldiers in WWII, by Serbian forces in Bosnia or by interahamwe militias in Rwanda are an inevitable consequence of a militarism built on the manipulation and exaggeration of the diseased masculinity capitalism fosters. Any idea that the armed forces are based on gender-neutral team-work and merit is dangerous rubbish and the best thing working class men and women can do is fight to dismantle such a corrupt institution.

Fortunately, but not always successfully, militarism has been countered by anti-militarist movements. Revolutionary anarchists have always taken a lead in anti-militarist activities. It should be obvious to all (but isn't!) that the people who have least to gain and the most to sacrifice on the altar of militarism are working class people. Apart from the cost of developing and maintaining the military in peacetime (how many jet fighters equal a hospital – not many), the cost in wartime is measured in blood. It is undoubtedly true that anti-war movements organised by official trade union and labour movements have usually been hopeless failures and often complete betrayals. The ignominious collapse of the Second International's policy of opposing WWI and recent loyalty to the state's cause in Iraq and Afghanistan fall into this category.

It is perhaps the constant and subtle techniques of mass persuasion which accounts for the apparent enthusiasm for wars by large sections of the working class. This misplaced faith in the State and the Nation has had disastrous consequences. Given the current military capacity of countries like the USA, and its willingness to use all the weapons in its arsenal, no matter how horrific and destructive, the war against militarism has never been more important.

16. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE WHOLE DEBATE about crime is hopelessly confused and confusing. One thing in certain, in the population at large, there is a fear of crime which politicians, especially the Tories but increasingly New Labour, are exploiting for political gain. There is an ever-growing demand by reactionaries of all kinds to "get tough with crime". It is an easy slogan to make which guarantees attention but, despite decades of initiatives and massive spending on policing, courts and prisons, crime is nowhere near being defeated. Why is this?

So What Do We Mean By Crime?

In capitalist society, what crimes actually are is determined by the state. They may, or may not, coincide with what working class people think is wrong behaviour. People living on social security benefits or the often extremely low wages offered by capitalists cannot survive on what is offered them. Is it any wonder that people resort to social security 'fraud', shoplifting or other petty crimes or don't ask which particular lorry something offered in a pub or over the garden fence has 'fallen off the back of'? Their attitudes change when they become the victims of crime, naturally! But not all crimes associated with poverty are tolerated. It is an unfortunate fact that some working class people are quite happy to steal from or abuse their own kind. Stealing television sets and videos on council estates or racial or sexual attacks are examples of criminal behaviour which is not acceptable to the working class.

Does this mean people have double standards? Not at all. Crime must be seen in class terms. Crime is defined and combated largely by the ruling classes acting through the state to maintain their order and protecting their property. The maintenance of order is presented as being in the interests of all classes but in reality is all about creating stable conditions for the promotion of capitalism. Capitalism is itself based upon a form of robbery: exploitation. But this is not defined by the state as crime. Similarly, we all have personal property to protect but the state is mainly concerned with the protection of private property and the instruments of legal robbery: banks, factories, shops etc. Working class people are generally aware of this. It is common to hear that there exists "one law for the rich and another for the poor'. So far, from an anarchist communist standpoint, we must be skeptical, to say the least, about the whole debate about crime.

Capitalism and Crime

We are clear about one thing: anti-social crime, meaning anything which oppresses, robs or does violence to the working class, must be opposed. We cannot wait until 'after the revolution' to fight the active enemies of the people. Racist attacks, sexual assaults, muggings are not acceptable and we have to find solutions to these problems here and now. This will mean vigilance and self-defense by the affected communities. Middle class crimes and assaults on the working class by asset strippers and speculators, though often invisible, are also insidious and must be opposed collectively, where possible, in this long dark night of capitalism. Of course such activities are rarely seen by the state as crimes at all, or if they are, they carry relatively light punishments.

Anti-social acts are a direct expression of predatory capitalism. Selfishness, bullying, violence and legalised robbery are all inherent in the system. The tentacles of class society and its ethics have entered into every part of life. It is not accidental that men are responsible for most crimes and that women hardly figure in crime statistics. Men are socialised from birth to be aggressive, violent, hard and tough, whilst women are socialised to be submissive and caring. This sort of upbringing does untold psychological violence to boys as they are shaped by their parents and society to struggle and fight. Add to this a strict and regimenting school system, a future of unemployment or dead-end jobs together with boredom and you have a mixture which invites trouble. This is not to excuse macho behaviour but is an attempt to place it in perspective. Crime and capitalism are inseparable.

Crime and the Anarchist Communist Society

If crime is a part of capitalist society, what will happen in an anarchist communist society? Anarchist communism is based upon the principles of a classless society in which freedom arises out of community solidarity and an enlightened system of socialisation and education. Private property will be abolished and the goal of production will be for the fulfillment of human need, not the accumulation of private wealth. Goods and services will be planned by the active communities working with similar communities elsewhere. The individual will be encouraged to take part in decision-making. In this way, goods and services will be provided to meet everyone's needs, so far as this is possible. Also, many services will be provided by the community just as public libraries are today, so that entertainment, transport etc will be on the basis of free access. Anarchist communism requires the abolition of money and exploitation. With a moneyless society there will be no possibility to accumulate wealth beyond that which a person can possibly hold on to. Since goods are free, there will be little point in stealing and therefore most, if not all, crimes against property will disappear.

In a caring society which will do away with the desperate struggle for everyday survival, many of the material bases of want will disappear. The revolution will consciously seek to eliminate anti-social behaviour and so education and the socialisation of

children will be directed towards tolerance, equality and sharing. Violence, which is an ever-present undercurrent of life today, will be discouraged through the development of co-operative play and education. The current obsession with aggressive individualism combined with the glorification of all kinds of competitive aspiration produces many social ills, not just crime. Whilst individualism as a means of achieving personal fulfillment is to be encouraged, it must be done so in a positive way. Gain for the individual is again for society as a whole. The point of anarchist communism is not to stifle individual effort but to allow it to express itself in constructive directions. In present day society, most people are cut off from their neighbours. Very few real communities survive and those that do are deeply imbued with the values of capitalist society. In an anarchist communist society, community and solidarity will bind society together.

Despite education and other means of socialisation there will be isolated acts of violence, sexual assaults and other anti-social behaviour. Many of these will be carried out by people who are emotionally disturbed. The community has a right to protect itself and steps will have to be taken to eliminate violent and other destructive behaviour. Such people should be cared for as far as possible within the community. This approach has nothing common with the current dumping of the mentally disturbed onto the streets. In 'face to face' communities everyone will recognise their neighbours and take on a collective and individual responsibility for social care and control. Psychiatric and medical help will be aimed at the integration of disturbed individuals and the promotion of their welfare. There are no easy solutions to some disturbed and obsessive behaviour such as sexual assaults, arson etc. But the approach to such problems will be enlightened, therapeutic and socially-based, not punitive.

Punishment

This leads us to a discussion of punishment. Punishment, the infliction of violence for so-called crimes, has been a feature of virtually every society from the earliest recorded history. The Old Testament approach to punishment in which not only the guilty are harmed but also their relatives and descendents is be found in many societies. Aspects of this approach have come down to us today in Islamic law and in the last Tory government's initiative in blaming and punishing parents for their children's crimes.

There are several justifications given for punishment, all of which are seriously flawed. Revenge is the most primitive; being based on the desire to 'get even' with the criminal. The 'retributive' approach starts from the assumption that individual crimes deserve punishment; murderers deserve to be executed, rapists deserve castration. Apart from the problem of gauging what is an appropriate punishment for each and every crime in a whole range of circumstances, this approach assumes that one act of inflicting pain (robbery, assault etc) is to be condemned while another, that of punishment (which might be equally brutal e.g. stoning of adulterers) is fine. It also accepts that a higher authority, i.e. the state, alone has the right to inflict punishment.

Linked to the vengeance justification for punishment is the idea of deterrence. Indeed the two are usually cited together in determining a 'suitable' punishment in the courts. The idea that criminal behaviour will be reduced by the threat of punishment on being caught does not stand up. Firstly, many serious crimes take place on the spur of the moment when people lose self-control through anger, jealousy or drugs. There is no thought of the consequences of such acts. Secondly, premeditated criminal acts are not deterred by the thought of an eventual punishment. What concerns criminals is the likelihood of getting caught. If being arrested seems likely, the crime doesn't get committed A few hundred years ago pick-pockets were executed at public hangings. Active among the enthralled crowds were professional pick-pockets! So much for deterrence.

The idea that society will be better off by carrying out punishments misses the point. An unequal, unfair society creates its own criminality. What needs to be eliminated is the social and economic base for crime. Similarly the idea of reforming criminals within the prison system is a sick joke. There is precious little enlightenment in Britain's repressive prison regime. In modern Britain, it is not the criminals that need to be 'reformed' but society itself which needs to be changed, lock, stock and barrel.

17. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THE DESIRE TO PUNISH – to inflict pain on perceived wrong-doers – has a long and inglorious history. It is an essential fact of punishment that it is imposed by people in power upon those who are relatively powerless, and for a specific purpose: to preserve a customary way of life, a society, a political system from attack or destruction at the hands of the disobedient. Religions, which have so often been the hand-maidens of authoritarian rule, are full of accounts of the most horrendous punishments delivered by God and his followers to those who deny his authority or commandments. An eternity of hellish pain awaits all who transgress in even minor ways, if they do not then submit to his authority before they die. The secular arm of the State –its police and army, magistrates, teachers and bosses – also reserves its greatest punishments for those who defy its power. It is also true that punishment is ineffective in achieving its (stated) aims.

Anarchist communists seriously object to the idea of punishment, on a number of grounds: moral, ideological and practical. Kropotkin, for example, in his pamphlet *Prisons And Their Moral Influence On Prisoners* demolishes all of the arguments used by the State to defend human incarceration. In what seems a remarkably up to date observation, he wrote in 1877 that "Once a man (sic) has been in prison, he will return. It is inevitable, and statistics prove it. The annual reports of the administration of criminal justice in France show that one-half of all those who yearly get into the police courts for minor offences received their education in prisons..... As for central prisons, more than one-third of the prisoners released from the supposedly correctional institutions are re-imprisoned in the course of the twelve months after their liberation" (from Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, Dover Books). The picture in these islands is hardly different today, indicating a pathological lack of imagination on the part of the State. In Britain, around one person in a thousand (and in the USA, it is one in every hundred)

is currently in prison – and crime is said to be continually on the rise! So much for punishment's effectiveness in combating crime.

Justifications

There are a number of arguments supposed to support the idea of punishment. These include the idea the idea that a given action deserves a certain reward or punishment – the 'good' child gets a reward, the 'bad' child is punished. Where good and bad actions are arbitrarily defined, where they are not agreed to by all but simply imposed definitions, and where supposedly bad actions include a range of things that are good for the human being (for instance to express yourself rather than sit quietly or to steal food when you are hungry), the rules of society will always be broken. The setting down of punishments in some kind of code and their supposedly objective application always reflects the arbitrary values, attitudes and prejudices of those writing the laws and enforcing them – the ruling class in other words. Since most laws are designed to protect private property and enforce social inequality, it is not surprising that most punishment is meted out against those who steal and upon those with least – the working class.

Another standard argument for punishment is that it deters people from committing crime or other 'anti-social' acts, again defined in terms which support the status quo. The problem once more is that it just does not work. As Kropotkin pointed out, the prisons were full of persistent offenders, despite frequent punishment. Hanging, for a range of offences from murder to the theft of an animal or even a single handkerchief, did not end 18th Century crime. Indeed it was often remarked that, while the people stood enthralled at the public hanging of a petty thief, his or her brothers in crime were working the crowd and relieving the admiring public of their valuables! So much for the ultimate deterrent!

Primitive Justice

Many people have a pretty primitive need to extract revenge for a wrong committed against them. Blood feuds are an example of this, where one wrongdoing has to be matched by another from generation to generation, to the absurd point that the killing go on even when the original cause of the vendetta has been forgotten about. As a rational response to wrongdoing, especially on the scale committed by the State, vengeance which is motivated by irrational feelings must rate as a wholly inappropriate response.

A further approach (and oh! how inventive society's intellectuals have been in trying to defend the indefensible) includes the idea that wrongdoers should be helped or reformed, thought there is always a surprising amount of pain included in any 'rehabilitative' process! Unfortunately the State has no real interest in exploring the social causes of crime which might prevent it in the first place, and in curing the criminal only when society at large turns against excessive punishment. The State may lip-service to the idea of rehabilitation but for every John McVicar or Jimmy Boyle, famous criminals who have both 'reformed', there are hundreds of thousands who gave not. Punishment remains to keep the lid on social unrest but patently fails to do so.

So what is the anarchist communist view on punishment? Firstly, it should be realised that we reject all the usual justifications and methods of punishment both today and in any future anarchist communist society. Capitalism damages people in countless ways, so it is not surprising this expresses itself in anti-social acts and behaviour. Capitalism creates the conditions within which 'crimes' are committed – crimes both of violence and against property in the form of poverty, unachievable desires, the flaunting of wealth and social status and so on, dividing, depriving and humiliating millions of people. Anarchist communism, in contrast, is based on a perfect equality of goods and choices, involving people in the creation and management of society that makes life worthwhile, secure and free.

In capitalist society there are huge differences in wealth and power, so it is very likely that its victims turn to violence and robbery in ways that are similar to the workings of capitalism itself. A society based on social justice, equality, freedom and the abolition of money. Given these circumstances, many of the preconditions which give rise to crime and punishment will disappear. Similarly, the abolition of the concept of the victimless crime will remove a whole category of acts from the realm of wider social involvement.

The classical anarchist approach to the problem of anti-social behaviour is therapeutic; to persuade the individual to remove themselves from the society they are harming and to put themselves out of harm's way. In extreme cases, where offered help was rejected, communities could claim the right not to have to endure the behaviour any more, imposing a kind of exile, shunning or turning away upon the individual or group. If harm was threatened or inflicted, the right to self-defence which all humans would retain would not be unknown. And surely, both individuals, groups and societies have the right to protect themselves form internal and external threats. Care would need to be taken that such a therapeutic approach was not used as a punishment, to control dissidents or stigmatise those different to the majority in some way. This would require a completely open society unlike today, when the punishment, control and incarceration of the 'mad' in secure hospitals goes on largely in secret. It would be foolish to argue that anarchist communist society would implicitly mean the abolition of anti-social behaviour – but what constitutes anti-social behaviour would have an extremely narrow definition unlike today, when it is extremely broadly defined.

There are no simple solutions to the problems caused by serial rapists and killers, for instance, two extreme forms of anti-social behaviour that no individual or society could be expected to tolerate. Our response should be governed by two principles which often exist in tension with each other but which are not incompatible: firstly the justification of individual and communal self-defence and protection, and secondly, the freedom of the individual. A caring approach, applied in a humanitarian and non-harmful way must in the end be the basis of an anarchist communist alternative to punishment.

18. GREEN POLITICS

IT CAN BE argued that the logical consequence of libertarian communist thought has always been the creation of a 'green' society since it has always posited the need for the destruction of capitalism, the system which, as we know, must expand or die and which has given birth to the ideologies of productivism and consumerism.

Anarchist and libertarian communist thinkers in the early days of the revolutionary working class movement, in their criticism of the 'modern' industrial system and its tendency to transform the worker into a part of the machinery, can be seen as proto-greens. But it would, however, be stretching things to say that the early anarchist movement was anything like a consciously 'green' movement, despite the critical contribution of people like Elisee Reclus, William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Peter Kropotkin. Whilst all of the above writers produced work that contained, 'green' implications or at least sentiment, none can be seriously considered as systematically 'green' thinkers. What can be argued is that the communist vision of people like Morris and Kropotkin, that of a de-centralised society of integrated labour in humanised environments, stands in stark contrast to many 'socialists' (beginning with some of the 'utopian' socialists but given a 'scientific' basis by Marx) who considered The Factory as a model for the new society.

Socialism and Progress

Such thinking found its realisation in the rapid industrialisation under state capitalism in the Soviet Union, which although bound to do so by its need to compete in world markets, found a perfect ideological support in the (generally unchallenged) belief amongst socialists that the industrialisation of the world was an 'historical necessity'. It is no coincidence that some of the most horrendous environmental destruction has been carried out under the banner of socialism! Unfortunately, anarchists have not been exempt from holding an uncritical attitude towards industrial 'civilisation'. Whilst it would be unusual to find any outright glorification of the modern factory amongst anarchists, undoubtedly from reading anarcho-syndicalist literature from the end of the last century, right up until quite recently, the impression is given that technology is not up for criticism and, disturbingly, that little life takes place outside of the factory. Anarchist communists haven't been much better in this respect. Why is that? Obviously, anarchists and libertarian communists are products of their times and the level of environmental destruction at the time of the first mass anarchist movements was by no means as apparent as it has been in the period since World War Two. Whilst revolutionaries argued that capitalism was destroying the worker and peasant, body and soul, it was not so obvious that capital was in the process of destroying the earth on which both worker and peasant stood. Neither was it possible to foresee that capital would develop the capacity to annihilate all life on the planet in the space of a few weeks or less with the aid of nuclear fission. The consciously 'green' movements which paralleled the great workers movements were generally mystical, often reactionary 'middle-class' movements, sometimes strongly Malthusian and racist and rarely identified with the existing 'progressive' social movements.

The Green 'Revolution'

Yet today much of the green movement claims to hold much in common with 'anarchism'. Even some of the most reformist elements in the green movement, from time to time, feel obliged to make noises about non-hierarchical organisation, devolved decision-making and other things historically identified with anarchist politics. Amongst large numbers of the direct-action orientated green activists, 'anarchist' sentiment is strong, though often very unfocused, and there is contempt for traditional forms of politics. There is also alienation from the traditional focus of anarchism, the class struggle. Often the working class are identified with the 'culture of industry' and, understandably, the notion of class solidarity is easily lost on, for example, road protesters (often unemployed) whose regular contact with their class brothers and sisters is in the form of £2.50 an hour rent-a-cop security guards!

Social Ecology

The anarchist movement itself has been forced to take on board explicitly green politics, has had to confront the issue of progress and has had to seriously discuss the nature of technology. Perhaps the first libertarian communist writer to comprehensively address the question of the ecological crisis and its solution has been Murray Bookchin. Indeed, Bookchin can be counted amongst the first theorists of the modern ecology movement itself, with books like 'Our Synthetic Environment' (1962) and 'Crisis in our Cities' (1965) setting the agenda for what would later be known as Social Ecology. Whilst using the anarchist critique of hierarchical power and the relationship between means and ends as a starting point.

Bookchin has developed a political perspective that has had a considerable impact upon, particularly, the North American green movement. His popularity amongst US and Canadian greens has been bolstered by his argument that the 'traditional' focus of revolutionary attention (whether Marxist, Anarcho-syndicalist or Anarchist Communist), the struggle of the working class, is no longer central to the revolutionary project. His belief that the key to social revolution lay in the development of oppositional lifestyles and the 'new' social movements (feminist, anti-nuclear, anti-racist etc.) has recently been revised to some extent. Social Ecological thought, which sees the potential for a liberatory technology (liberated from its present owners) in a future ecological libertarian society has come into conflict with another green current claiming to be anarchist, the anarcho-primitivists. The anarcho-primitivist position basically holds that an non-hierarchical society is impossible whilst any form of industrial civilisation remains and that, therefore, talk of a liberatory technology is nonsense. Whilst many writings from the anarcho-primitivist 'movement' (it is a far from homogenous entity) are an excellent counter-balance to technophile arguments coming from various sources (including 'revolutionary') their overall perspective lacks any revolutionary dynamic and often betrays a confused misanthropic idealist fanaticism at odds with authentic anarchism.

Towards a Green Libertarian Communism

Any would-be revolutionary movement today cannot ignore the necessity of developing a 'green' perspective. But this does not mean simply tagging on a few eco-friendly ideas to an otherwise concrete grey politics. It entails an active engagement with specifically anti-capitalist forces within the green movement. It means presenting a class struggle anarchist analysis of the present struggles against environmental destruction to those involved, to those effected. The struggles against the roads, for just one example, are implicitly class struggles as they challenge not merely present government policy but capitalist logic itself, the logic (and necessity!) for expansion. Likewise, when the greens talk about 'zero growth' anarchist and libertarian communists must point out the explicitly communist nature of this idea. Equally, the latter must attempt to understand the implications of their politics for the environment (in the broadest sense). Already a dynamic is appearing as the limitations of traditional politics are becoming increasingly exposed as the world and its inhabitants face the choice of a new society or slow annihilation. If the historical choice has been between socialism or barbarism it is now between green libertarian communism and a barbaric death in clouds of toxic fumes.

19. FEDERALISM

ONE PART OF THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT is collectivist in the sense that they believe that a future anarchist society will be based on a series of communities of one sort or another. Anarchist communists in particular envisage individual freedom and security, for instance, as deriving from social life, where we live and work in solidarity with one another. Our goal, therefore, is not a world of individuals concerned only with their own well-being regardless of others, but one in which personal freedom develops and is expressed to the benefit of all. Freedom comes from, and does not stand in opposition to, community.

Collectivist anarchists are, unfortunately, lumped alongside all other anarchists who themselves are portrayed by the media as isolated individuals bent on terror. The reality is that, throughout history and mostly even today, anarchists work in groups and some, like the Anarchist Federation, seek to build large-scale national and international organisations. We seek to build a mass anarchist movement. The problem that presents itself, once we reject individualism, is how to organise the movement and, hopefully, a future society in ways that maximize the benefit of solidarity while preserving and extending individual and collective freedom. How do we, in our revolutionary struggle and the eventual transformation of society, avoid the pitfalls of bureaucracy, elites and power?

To quote one Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta, "An anarchist organisation must.... allow for complete autonomy and independence and therefore full responsibility to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it is useful to come together for co-operative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfil one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme". (*Il Risveglio,* October 15 1927). In other words, for an anarchist organisation to operate effectively on a principled basis, its members must combine freedom with responsibility, full participation in the decision-making processes with a commitment to carry out collective decisions No anarchist organisation can be effective if its members act against collective aims and methods. Equally however, no organisation can be anarchist without total freedom to take part in the formulation of goals, aims and methods plus, ultimately, the right to withdraw from this process.

The Federalist Approach

The usual method adopted by anarchists to combine freedom with organisation has been federalism. This idea is the reverse of the standard form of organisation in which decisions are made at the top by an elite and carried out by the rank and file. Under a federal system, autonomous members of the organisation, organised in groups or branches at the base make the decisions which are carried out by the organisation. Political power flows from the base to the summit or rather, from the circumference to the centre, since anarchist organisation is horizontal (based on equality), not vertical (based on inequality and hierarchy. Anarchist organisations should be expressions of the collective voice, not directing centers which control people.

The basic 'unit' is the member who voluntarily joins the organisation. Usually a member will be part of a local or industrial group which freely agrees to join a larger unit at, for instance, the district level. The district is in turn affiliated to a regional body which is part of a national and ultimately international federation. The most local or central group will take those decisions which affect it most closely and which it is best placed to decide about. Small collectives might decide how to live and work together – this will have small impact outside. A district commune might decide on the location of a new medical centre but the damming of a river, which has much wider consequences, would have to be agreed upon by a group of communes, with all interests represented. Each part of society, which is, of course, the individuals comprising that society, can influence the orientation of the whole, its goals and methods. Should a group disagree with decisions reached, it has the right to withdraw from the process and its affiliation with the whole. However, if it has participated in the decision-making process, to quote Malatesta again, it has a duty "to take no action which is contrary to the accepted program" so long as it remains within the boundaries of the whole: whether organisation, commune or federation.

For a federal system to operate in an anarchist fashion, there must be the greatest possible degree of involvement by members, free communication and checks on the development of either 'leaders' or 'functionaries', for instance through rotation of all representational positions, the regular and extraordinary recall of delegates or 'officials', and a ban on permanent postings. Strictly speaking, in both anarchist organisations and societies, there will be no 'official' or 'formal' positions and no 'officials' to occupy them. Each part of organisation and society represents itself directly through mass media accessible to all with an interest, and through temporary delegates, sometimes elected, sometimes chosen by lot. In the end, however, the health of any organisation will be dependent on and ultimately reflect the enthusiasm and commitment of those who comprise it.

Not only anarchist organisations but anarchist societies would operate on a federal basis. Society would be a 'honey-comb' or 'lattice' or inter-connected groups, collectives and communes, sometimes making decisions for themselves (but sharing information about the decisions with others), sometimes joining with other groups to make joint decisions and carry out joint activities. Each group would have the right to self-determination in respect of it's own affairs and also the right to secede from the whole in extreme circumstances. The basic social grouping would probably be the neighbourhood commune (for decisions affecting all who live in a particular area) and the affinity group (for those who work together or otherwise co-operate). These would voluntarily federate to a wider body, perhaps regional or provincial (in the former case) or as a federation or association (in the latter). Delegates from the groups and communes would deal with issues that required the co-operation of more people or other communes. There would be a natural limit to the complexity of this form of organisation since, at a certain level or beyond a certain point, co-operation ceases to be more effective than at local levels.

In Practice

Federalism is a straightforward form of organisation which combines the maximum individual and local freedom and autonomy with collective decisions. It permits planning on a wide scale through negotiation, co-operation and mutual agreement, whether planning is being done by a group of anarchists or a complete anarchist society. Federalism, with its vital right to secession, safeguards all minorities from potential majorities, even anarchist ones! However though an ideal picture, federalism alone cannot create or preserve a free society. It must be combined with the elimination of centralized power, hierarchy, authority and inequality. Where these are preserved, freedom is a sham and any federation entirely bogus, a fact that would be revealed as soon as one group challenged or opposed another. In theory, the old Soviet Union was a federation of republics which enjoyed the right of secession. In reality it was probably the most centralized of twentieth century nations. The federal structure of Yugoslavia was similarly bogus. When the central authority failed, as it did in the 1990s, local nationalisms and ethnic rivalries re-emerged and the pseudo-federations disintegrated, with disastrous consequences. Any such federation based on group, social or national inequalities, and which involves none of the essential features of the anarchist vision, can form the basis of anarchist organisation nor complete the task of revolution. It is the task of revolutionary anarchists and the working class to create it.

20. INTERNATIONALISM

INTERNATIONALISM is the solidarity of revolutionaries across national boundaries, Is a key part of working class struggle. The last two hundred years or so has seen national states glorifying patriotism and nationalism. As a tool of social control it has been very effective, indeed millions of people have sacrificed their lives for the national cause.
The First and Second World Wars are just the clearest examples of a continual process of aggression carried out by nation states against their rivals.

Collapse of the Old World Order

As Leninist 'communism' has collapsed all over the world, the ideological gap has been to a large extent filled by nationalism. This is carried to an absurd degree in countries like the former Yugoslavia, where statelet confronts statelet, all in the name of national pride and self-determination. Yet this nationalism which has been so powerful in the 20th Century goes against the whole development of capitalism. If nothing else, capitalism is internationalist, at least as far as the major corporations are concerned. These enterprises are huge, employ hundreds of thousands of workers in several countries and often possess capital in excess of some of the world's second rank nations. Firms like ICI, Exxon, General Motors, Coca Cola, Sony etc., whilst being based within nation states, owe no country loyalty. Their goal is growth and increased profits. They are unwilling to be held back by mere national governments. Partly in recognition of this fact of capitalist life and partly to secure the domination of the world's markets, once again major imperialist rivalries are beginning to emerge. NAFTA, the EC, and the courting by Japan of countries around the Pacific Rim, are all aimed at securing domination of the world's markets.

The Need for Unity

For these reasons alone, it is vital that the revolutionary working class movement looks for unity. However, workers' internationalism is not simply a response to the international threat of capitalism. Internationalism dates back to the 19th Century, especially to the formation of the International Workingmen's (sic) Association (The First International). There was a recognition of the need for international revolution and thus the necessity of an internationally-organised revolutionary movement. Despite the cynical manipulation of socialists such as Marx, who preferred to wreck the First International rather than let it fall under the influence of the anarchist, and the patriotism and chauvinism displayed by the social democratic parties which wrecked the Second International on the eve of the Great War, internationalism has been a continuing threat. Lenin's Third Internationalism was a tool of the Bolsheviks, becoming under Stalin a shameless conveyor belt for Soviet foreign policy.

These pseudo-internationalisms do not invalidate the necessity of international solidarity, they make it all the more vital. Unlike capitalism which seeks conformity on a world scale - Big Macs and Pepsi from New York to Beijing- internationalism welcomes and supports the diversities of peoples. It is anti-racist and advocates a unity based on the recognition and celebration of our differences and similarities. Internationalism is a positive statement about the solidarity of all exploited and oppressed working people. Internationalism is also a tactical device to enable the revolutionary working class to overthrow capitalism. If capitalism is internationalist, so must be the working class. Given the wide differences in economic development between

nations, it would be surprising to find revolution breaking out on a world scale simultaneously. No, far more likely will be revolution occurring within the national boundaries. Then, international solidarity becomes vital to defend the isolated revolution and to spread it onto a wider a wider scale.

Revolution

We should not fall into the trap believing that revolutions must necessarily succumb to the forces of world imperialism. Just because the USA, for example, has a vast arsenal at its disposal does not mean that it can use it, or that if used, it can be effective. The example of the USA's inability to defeat the warlord Aideed in impoverished Somalia is an example of the limitations of armed intervention. So the young working class revolution, even if initially restricted to one or two countries has a good chance of success, if there is international working class support. Such support might include strikes, boycotts and agitation for revolution on 'home front'. Finally, internationalism is not only means to the end of revolution. It is an end in itself, in the sense that national barriers and parochialism will be broken down. There will be an international federation of peoples. For the first time the world will belong to no-one and everyone.

Long live the International!

21. Revolutionary Violence

THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE within the anarchist movement has long been controversial. The early anarchist movement associated with Michael Bakunin was openly insurrectionary and the anarchist communists of the late 19th century regarded acts of terror against oppressors as perfectly legitimate. Kropotkin, Malatesta, Most and others enthused over acts of 'propaganda by the deed'. This idea stressed the importance of exemplary actions like strikes, occupations of public buildings etc, by small groups of revolutionaries that would ignite an already revolutionary situation. It very quickly turned into the idea of determined individuals carrying out individual attacks on kings, presidents and capitalists. Given the severe repression in many European and South American countries (for example France after the bloody crushing of the Paris Commune) and where open activity was difficult, this was understandable. The State, through the media, was able to so closely associate violence with anarchism that the two ideas became almost interchangeable in the public mind, to the detriment of the movement. Today there are many so-called anarchists who reject the whole revolutionary tradition. So, how should revolutionary anarchists approach the issue?

The first point to make is that it is states acting in defence of privilege and exploitation that practice violence on a large scale. The assassination of heads of state pales into insignificance in contrast to the normal, everyday actions of the state. In a real sense, States are organised violence. The armed forces, police, prisons and so on are institutional forms of violence used to protect the status quo. And the status quo is in itself violence for it means mass poverty, homelessness, poor health and despair. Should anyone question this legalised everyday terror they are met with the full repressive fist of the State.

State Violence

And states are not content to inflict violence on their subject populations, but relish the opportunity to apply it to other peoples. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are perhaps the most horrific examples of this. Some leaders, such as Hitler and Stalin, excelled in murdering millions at home and abroad. Set against such horrific, mass violence comitted by states, the bomb throwers and revolutionaries of history must be seen for what they were -heroic, if misguided people acting in self-defence against 'normal' state violence. With the exception of pacifists, most people accept self-defence as legitimate. To defend oneself or one's family from attack is readily understood and accepted. To defend an oppressed and exploited class (of which we ourselves are part) is just an extension of this principle. To use appropriate and measured violence against the very embodiment of violence which is the state, is no more than to launch a counter-attack. A violent insurrection or general strike must be seen in these terms - legitimate, justified and necessary self-defence against the monster of the capitalist state. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge this necessarily accepts the 'right' of the capitalist state to devour us.

A key point however, needs to be considered, namely that individual acts of violence, however well intentioned, justified by anger, poverty or despair are generally counter productive. Individual terror and group conspiracies are quite easily containable by the State. Rather than inspiring the masses to insurrection, they have generally appalled them, especially given the huge propaganda machines available to oppressors. Revolutionary mass violence is, however, a different thing if it expresses a determination to overthrow exploitation and oppression. And it takes various forms. The seizure of workplaces, banks and other property is inherently violent since it forcibly removes their possession from the owners. To not do so would be to capitulate to the system of exploitation. Anarchist revolutionaries defend every method used by the oppressed against the enemy from peaceful and legal protest up to and including violent uprising. Violence as a goal in itself is unjustified and indeed in revolutionary situations working class people have tended to shrink from its use. Not so the State, which if it secures victory in any particular phase of the class struggle, unleashes mass terror against it's enemies, the people. Anyone doubting this should look at the aftermaths of the Paris Commune in the 1870s or the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

Revolutionary violence is the clear expression of the masses' refusal to continue any longer with the old ways. Sometimes, however, determined minorities, often inspired by Marxist-Leninism, have managed to seize control of such movements for their own ends. The October Revolution of 1917 led to the creation of one of the world's most brutal states. This mistake must not be repeated. Either the revolution is about smashing the State once and for all or it merely brings about another form of oppression

The State and Violence

During the last ten years, the working class worldwide has been subject to ever-increasing attacks. Mass unemployment is now seen as 'normal' by those unaffected by it, inevitable or a product of 'development'. There has been a large redistribution wealth from the poor to the rich, leaving millions in a state of near destitution. Exceptionally regressive taxes have driven millions into a hand to mouth existence. State inspired racist violence is common in some parts of our cities. Given this context, is it surprising that we have had outbursts of near-insurrectionary violence? The Poll Tax riot in Trafalgar Square was a clear and welcome expression of class anger, as were the 'hit squads' which immobilised vehicles and stood up to the police during the lengthy miners' strike of 1984-85. When black people form self-defense groups against racist attacks, they are justified. When demonstrators retaliate against police provocations they are justified. When a whole class rises up against the State and Capitalism, it is justified.

When we read accounts of people suffering often horrible deaths in the struggle for life – butchered by war lords, starving in isolated settlements, dying of disease in urban shanties - perhaps those who condemn revolutionary violence will start to think more clearly. Capitalism and the State aren't going to go away or be reformed. They need to be destroyed, and unfortunately violence by the working class is almost certainly a necessary ingredient in this process.

22. TERRORISM

ANARCHISTS HAVE LONG been associated with mindless violence in popular images. We can see *The Secret Agent* on television and often read of "riots lead by anarchists" in newspapers. So what have anarchists done to deserve this? The ruling class have always used 'anarchist' as a term of abuse, even before the anarchist movement arose in the 19th century. Today's rulers never miss an opportunity to slander us either. But anarchists are not entirely without blame. Towards the end of the last century many anarchists became impatient with the slow results o 'propaganda by the word' and developed the theory of 'propaganda by the deed'. At first this was understood as the action of determined groups of revolutionaries by demonstrations, insurrections and other forms of collective direct action to ignite an already potentially revolutionary situation. But in later decades it became identified with individual assassinations. It was thought that if anarchist militants took an active lead and physically attacked members of the ruling class the working class would be inspired to revolution.

Disaster

This theory was a total disaster. It left perhaps 20 prominent leaders (who were easily replaced) dead, and the whole anarchist movement severely damaged. Governments were given an excuse to pass repressive laws aimed at smashing the workers' movement and to whip up anti-anarchist hysteria. The Russian anarchist communist Kropotkin, who had been a staunch defender of these tactics was one of the first to realise that they were mistaken. In a series of articles in 1890 he stated that: "One must be with the people, who no longer want isolated acts, but want men (sic) of action inside their ranks." He went on to warn against: "the illusion that one can defeat the coalition of exploiters with a few pounds of explosives". It is clear that as a means towards social revolution, terrorism is a non-starter. If this is the case, then why do terrorist groups exist today?

Obviously the obvious answer is that the terrorists of today are not interested in social revolution. Most are involved in ‚national liberation' struggles, are marxist-leninists or both. They are usually authoritarian vanguardists of the worst kind. In their own terms these groups are occasionally successful, that is they 'liberate' a country or establish a new dictatorship called 'socialism'. Anarchists should have no time for these would-be bosses of tomorrow. Yet terrorism still holds a fascination for some people who would consider themselves anarchists. These range from the cheerleaders, often seen sporting the tee-shirt of their favourite terrorist group, to the action men who think we should take up armed struggle now. Much of this can be explained by impatience and a lack of understanding of what social revolution means. To create an anarchist communist society working class people must destroy the current power structure and take power into their own hands. Terrorist groups do nothing to further this aim. Being a small armed elite they take on the role of a vanguard which will solve people's problems for them. Anarchists should be able to see the flaws in any group which has the arrogance to think it can solve the world's problems by itself. At the very least this can lead to further divisions within the working class - between the terrorist leaders and the passive followers. Instead of encouraging people to think and act for themselves, terrorists seek to control struggles for their own ends. As Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein said, "This is a special message for young people - no hijackings, no joyriding, no stone throwing at the Brits. If you want to do these things, there are organisations to do it for you." Even terrorist groups which claim to be anarchist cannot escape from their vanguardist nature. An 'anarchist' from the June 2nd Movement in West Germany argued "...analysis of imperialism tells us that the struggles no longer start in the metropolis, it's no longer a matter of the working class but what's needed is a vanguard in the metropolis that declares its solidarity, with the liberation movements of the Third World". This is hardly putting forward a libertarian communist position.

Our Role

The work of revolutionaries is to clarify and co-ordinate struggles as a part of the working class. In non-revolutionary periods anarchist communists will be a conscious minority with 'the leadership of ideas'. We must always be pushing for struggles to go as far as possible and be linked up with other movements. However, we should never let ourselves over-estimate our own importance and we should never forget that when revolutions do break out revolutionary organisations are often taken by surprise. Another question which must he addressed when looking at terrorism is the use of violence. By planting bombs in public places terrorists again show their arrogance and a disturbing contempt for human life. In any bombing campaign whether by air force, car bomb or parcel bomb, there will inevitably be civilian casualties (or collateral damage if the bombing

was done by an air force). Whilst this will provide no problem for the authoritarians of governments and terrorist governments in waiting, for revolutionaries this is unacceptable. We reject the random violence of terrorists but we are not pacifists either.

For us, the old violent tactics/non-violent tactics are falsely polarised. Many activities involving mass action do not involve violence, whilst others do. Large demonstrations and strikes can often turn to violence and we should accept the need for self-defense. Groups like the hit squads arising from the miners strike are genuine expressions of working class resistance. It would be foolish to sit in ivory towers of idealistic principles condemning this.

As anarchists we must constantly fight in all areas of life to advance the revolutionary process. At times we will need to defend ourselves against the violence of our enemies. But no matter how hard the struggle is, or how frustrated we are in failure, we must never forget old declaration: "the emancipation of workers must he brought about by the workers themselves". Elitist groups of any kind can only be a hindrance to this.

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